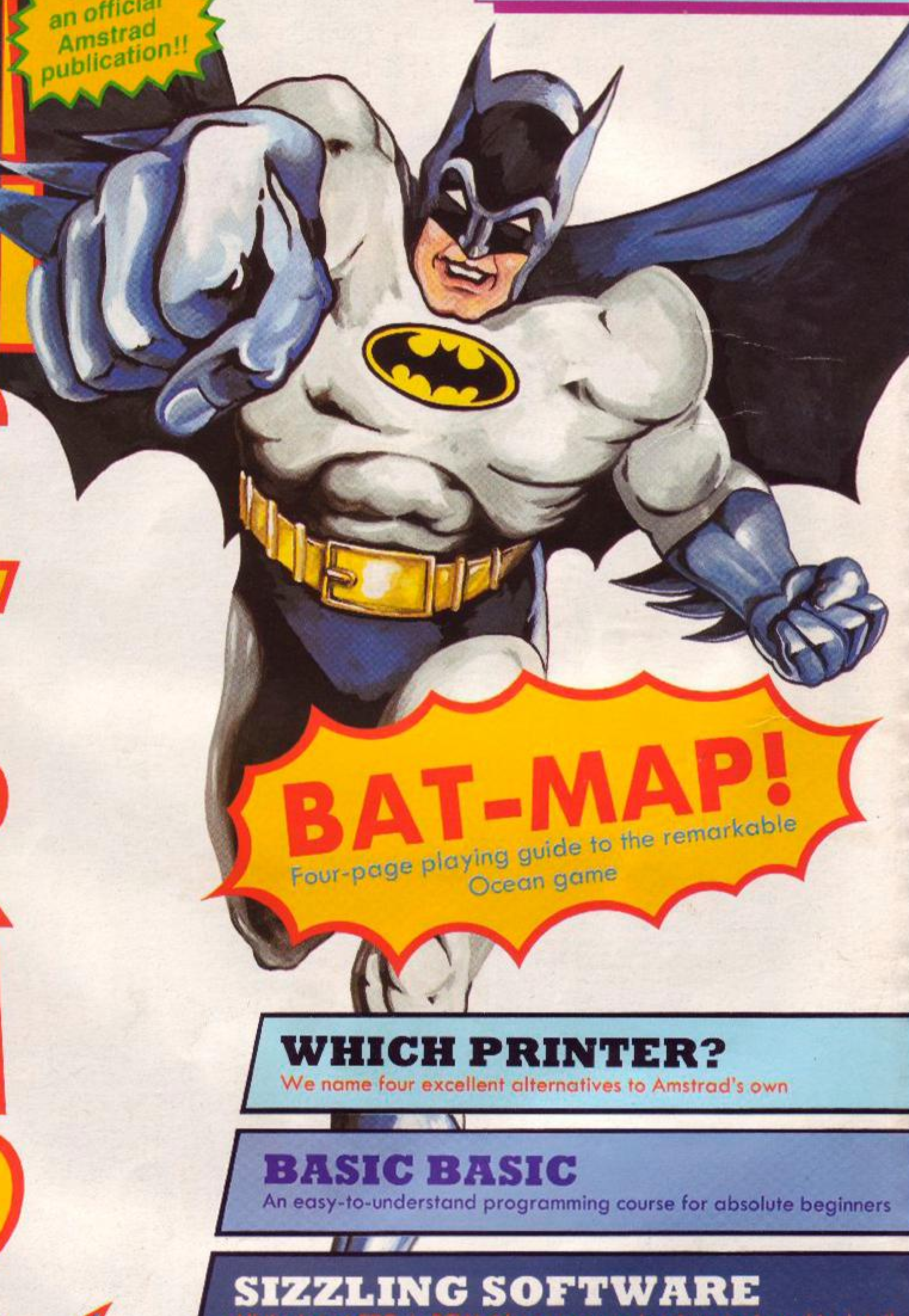
The independent CPC / PCW mag: Created on Amstrad keyboards for Amstrad users by Amstrad addicts

No.9 JUNE 1986 £1.00

AMSTRAD ACTION

NOT an official Amstrad publication!!

THE MOULD-BREAKING MEGAZINE FROM FUTURE PUBLISHING



BAT-MAP!

Four-page playing guide to the remarkable Ocean game

WHICH PRINTER?

We name four excellent alternatives to Amstrad's own

BASIC BASIC

An easy-to-understand programming course for absolute beginners

SIZZLING SOFTWARE

All the latest CPC + PCW titles, games and serious, reviewed in detail

PLUS

BOUNDER MASTERGAME ● WINTER GAMES RAVED ● 464 FEARS
CP/M AIDS ● SNAPPY TYPE-INS ● STUNNING OFFERS ● COMPETITIONS
SPIN DIZZY POKE ● ADVENTURE TIPS ● SUGARMAN ● AND MORE

OUR SOFTWARE WAS MADE FOR IT.

Without doubt, the Amstrad range of computers is rapidly establishing itself at the forefront of the personal micro industry.

In response to this trend US Gold and Ultimate Play The Game have produced a series of stunning conversions, designed to exploit the best features of the Amstrad micro.

Here are four outstanding classic games from our ever increasing range that will enhance any software collection.

Direct from the Arcades of America comes KUNG FU MASTER. Martial art experts and demons of every description are your obstacles in this fast paced video action thriller. To travel through the Wizard's temple to rescue the fair maiden you must avoid demons, dragons, snakes and killer bees. Beware of weapon wielding henchmen and defeat each of the deadly guardians to advance to each of the five floors. Your only defence is your martial art skills!

Sequel to the highly acclaimed Beach-Head, BEACH-HEAD II once again pits the allied forces against the cruel dictator. A true 'head to head' game with voice simulation and superb multi screen graphics.

From the Ultimate Play The Game Stable, GUNFRIGHT captures the atmosphere of the Old West at its wildest worst! As Sheriff Quickdraw you'll have your hands full just keeping yourself and the townsfolk alive, never mind dealing with the likes of Quick Draw McGraw, fastest gun in the West!

Finally there is DAMBUSTERS. This simulation really needs no introduction; an accurate reconstruction of 617 Squadron's epic Second World War raid on the Moehne, Eder and Sorpe Dams in Germany's industrial heartland; DAMBUSTERS is already regarded as an all-time software classic.

All these great games are available now especially for the Amstrad at better computer stores, nationwide.

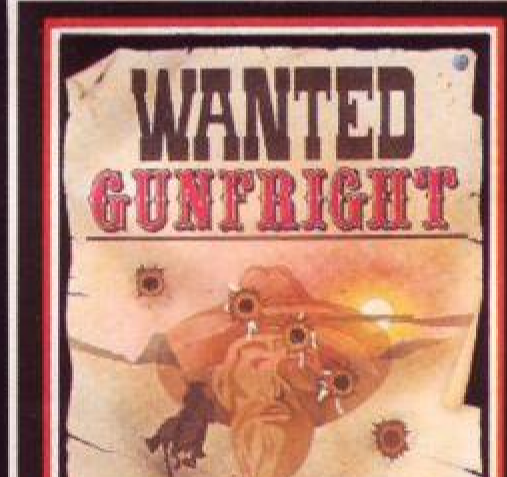


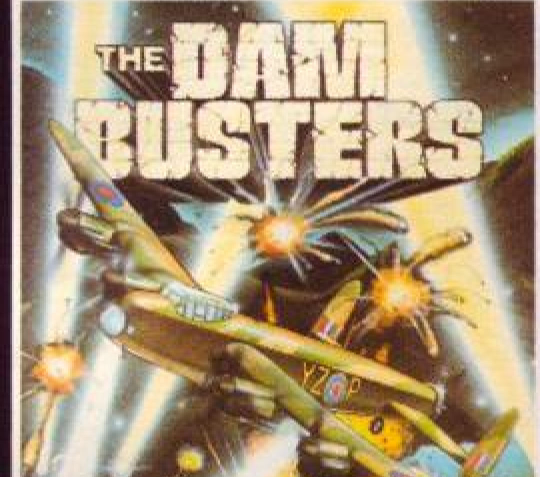
KUNG-FU MASTER

AMSTRAD

DISK £14.95
CASSETTE £9.95







U.S. GOLD All American Software — ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME

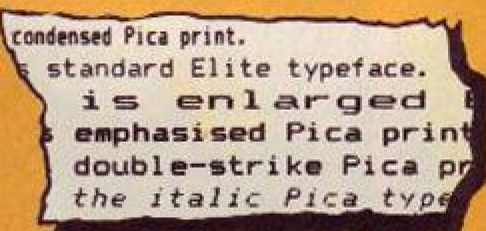
Selected U.S. Gold & Ultimate Play The Game product is available from selected branches of: Boots, John Menzies, WHSMITH

THE LINE-UP

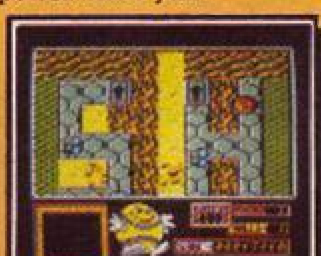
AMSTRAD ACTION JUNE 1986

JUNE SPECIALS



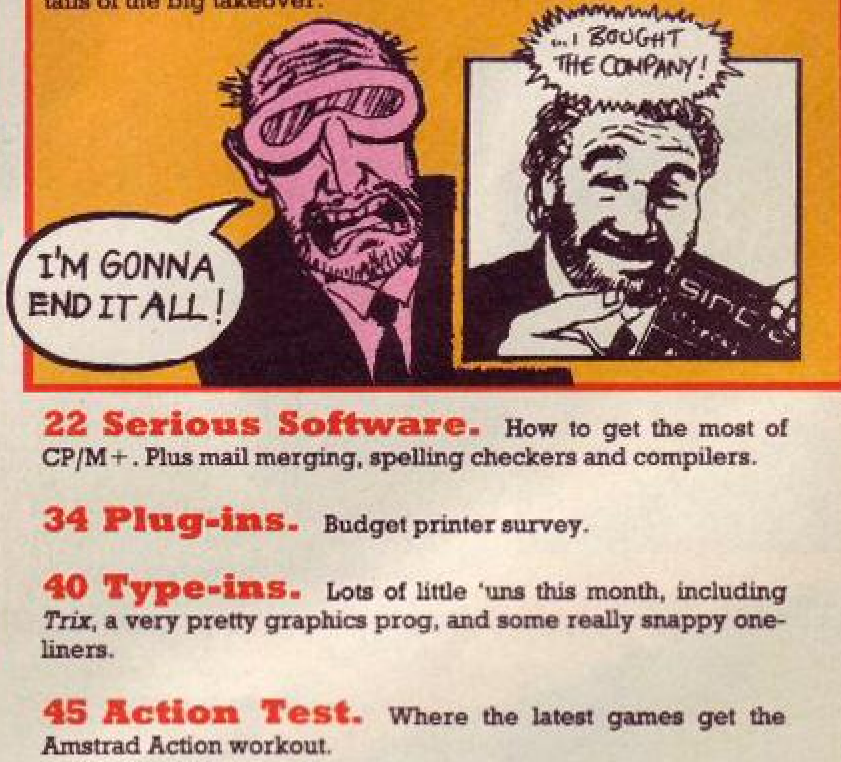


HOT REVIEWS



JUICY OFFERS

ACTION REGULARS



AMSTRAD

Arcade

Killer-by... fro...

YIE AR KUNG FU

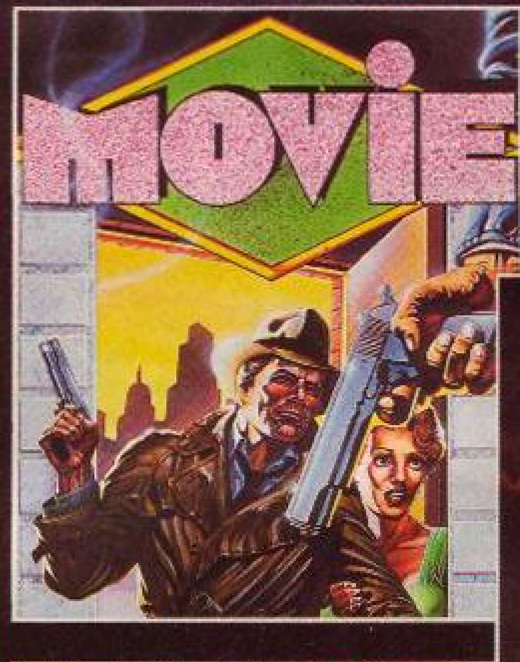
If you can master the ten moves, expect the unexpected and FIGHT for your LIFE against the formidable masters of the martial arts you may live to meet them again on the mountain or in the Temple.

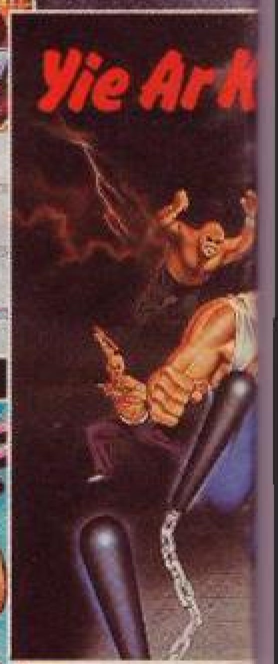
MOVIE

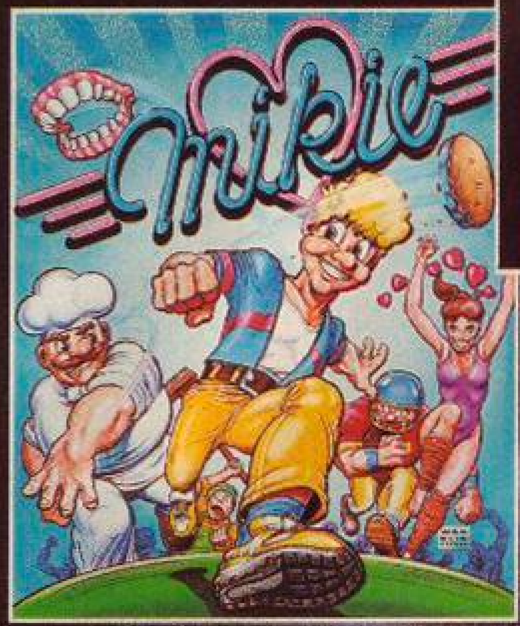
- *Arcade style action drama
- *3D gangsters 'hit' your screen
- *Interactive 'bubble' speech
- *Don't miss this picture – it speaks for itself!

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ARC... HO... SHO...

imagine

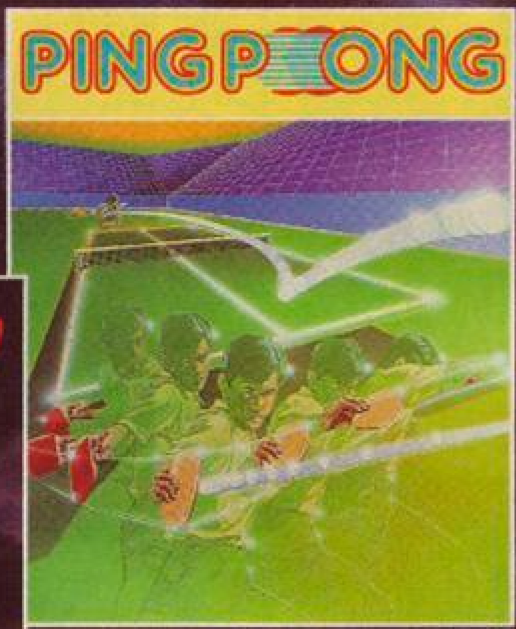
..the name of the game

Imagine Software (1984), 6 Central Street
Manchester M2 5NS. Tel: 061-834 3939. Telex: 669977

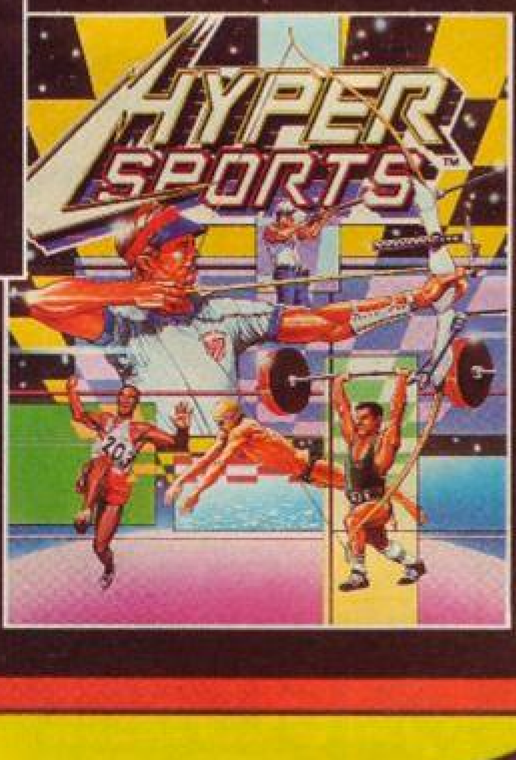
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PING PONG

You can almost feel the tension of the big match breaking through the screen...the expectant crowd is almost on top of you! You return the service with a top spin backhand, then a forward back-spin, the ball bounces high from your opponent's looping, defensive lob...SMASH!...a great shot opens the score...but this is only your first point! Play head to head or against the computer in this, Konami's first and best table-tennis simulation.

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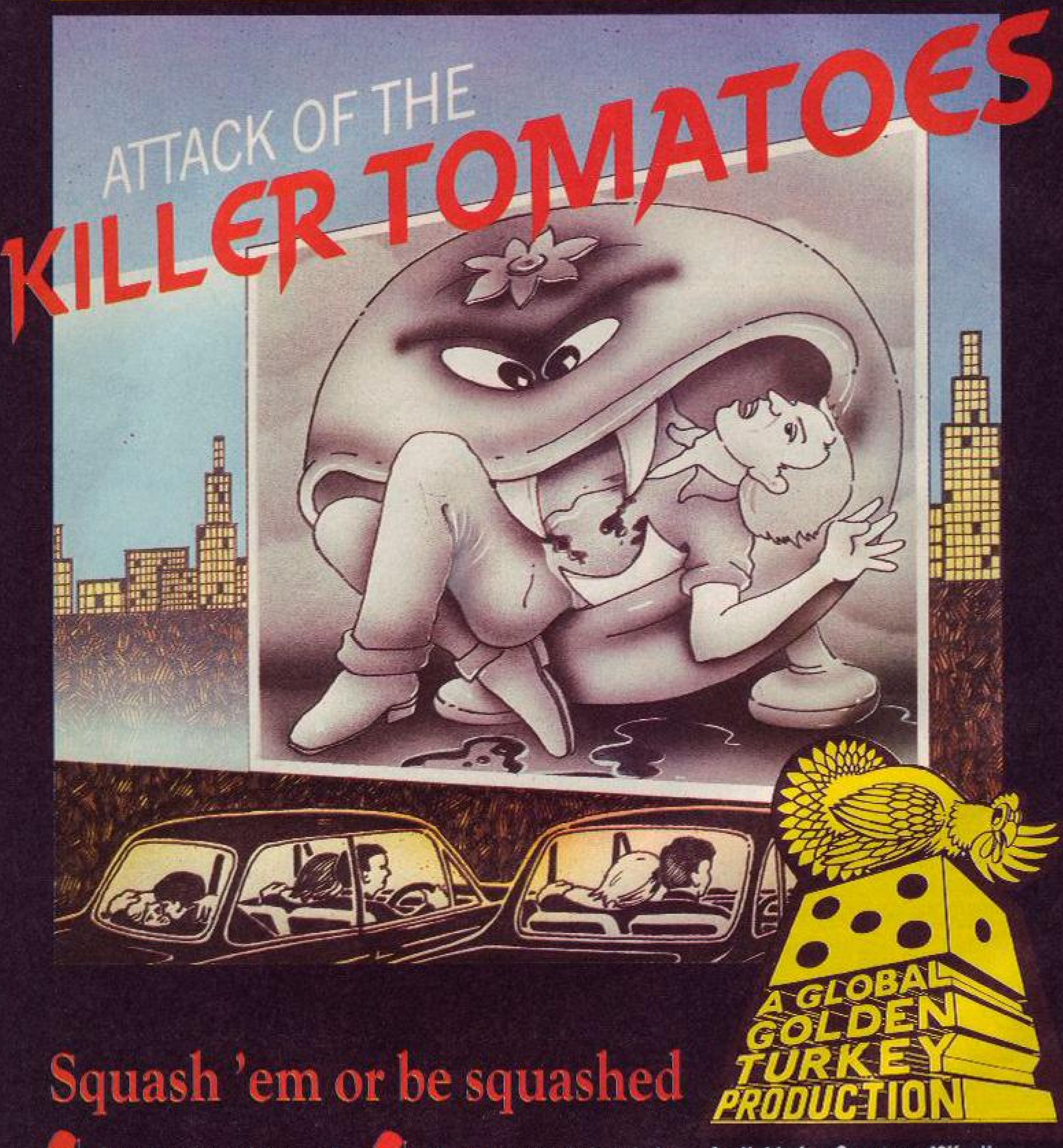
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AA ED Lines

The Covenant

Have problems transferring last month's free cover cassette game onto disc? So did we. See this month's ReAction.

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Dear Readers

One change you may have noticed on this month's front cover is the inclusion of the, OK, tiny letters 'PCW'. They spell out the fact that we are now including coverage of these machines which have done so much to contribute to Amstrad's success in recent months.

If you're a PCW owner reading us for the first time, welcome. We think you'll like it here. If you're not, rest assured that PCW coverage will be additional to and not at the expense of our commitment to the fun-loving CPC machines.

Take this month's cover feature – a playing guide to Ocean's superb Batman which won a rave review in our last issue. Putting it together just about killed us.

First we discovered that the person we'd commissioned to map the game had sold it to another publication – aaargh! So Andy Wilton and Bob Wade had to solve the game, generously giving up hour after hour they could have spent doing work to piece together the elusive Batmobile.

Artist Trevor Gilham naturally had to join in to turn their pencilled scribbles into a thing of beauty. It didn't really matter that he spent a couple of days and nights drawing the entire thing sideways and therefore had to start again from scratch. I mean, this gave his colleague George Murphy time to produce the cover illustration itself.

After all that, I just hope you have fun using the thing.

Matt Nicholson your new editor should be filling this spot next issue. And I'll be able to go back to writing pay cheques, dreaming up special offers, and chasing up horrible software houses who won't produce their goods on time. Enjoy the mag.

Chris Anderson

AA OPINION

Without doubt last month's big event in the Amstrad world was Alan Sugar's shock purchase of most of Sinclair. We think it's good news for most Amstrad owners because it dramatically strengthens the company's position and makes clearer its long-term commitment to home computers.

The one question mark is over the 464. In recent months Amstrad appear to have put all their efforts into pushing the PCW machines, and to a lesser extent the 6128. The 464 has largely been left to its own devices. The Sinclair deal leaves it even more out on a limb with Amstrad seeming likely to concentrate their bottom-end-of-the-market drive on a revamped Spectrum.

We think cutting support for the 464 would be a tragic mistake. It would effectively be saying that the Amstrad label is for serious or business machines only. Yet a huge part of Amstrad computers' appeal has always been that they are both useful *and fun*. Killing the 464 could quickly lead to a fall off in CPC entertainment software development – and this would hurt many 6128 owners too.

Don't do it, Alan.

Cheque bouncers

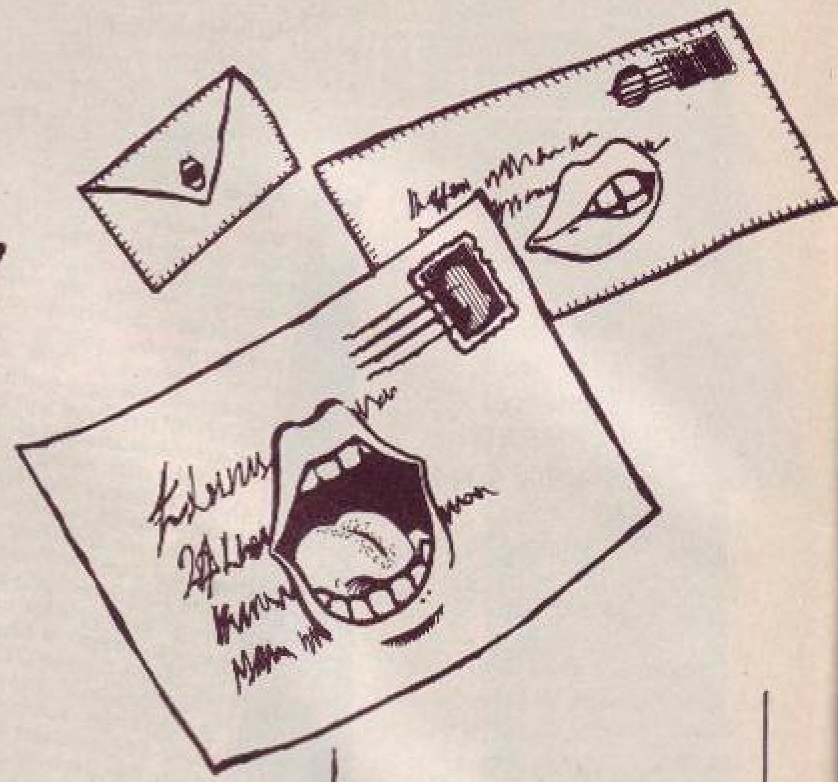
Most of you are very pleasant, generous, warm-hearted people. A couple of you are just a teensy-weensy bit naughty. The sort of people who'd purchase goods from our Mail Order department using a cheque from a closed bank account, and then refuse to reply to polite requests for a payment their bank will honour.

If anyone out there knows an **F A Davies** of 48 Fford Celyn, Denbigh, Wales or a **T D Connell** of 214 Bexley Road, Eltham, London, maybe they could ask them how they're enjoying their free software.



Re-Action





An extra helping of letters this month – as usual they range from the logical to the angry to the sophisticated to the entertaining to the downright silly. That's because you wrote them and you're like that. We love 'em all.

As well as these, this issue sees the introduction of a special ReAction annexe called Problem Attic (and you thought we had nothing upstairs) in which we, that is Chris Anderson, aided and abetted by Andrew Wilton, attempt to answer some of your many questions.

The address for missives of all types is:
ReAction, Amstrad Action, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 5AH.

Transferring *The Covenant* to disk

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. You seem to slipped up a little here, don't you? I mean, how could you do it? Are you getting slack in your young old age?

I suppose I had better tell you what I am waffling on about, before you think I've cracked up – it's the conversion program you published for getting your brill free game onto disk.

Yes, it's wrong. I hazard a guess that the program you printed converts the original program to disk. To rectify the mistake I've enclosed a routine that will do the job correctly.

Ian Grainger
Wingate, Co. Durham

You've got it Ian – 'Oh dear' etc., just about sums it up.

The reason for the listing not working is that the company duplicating the cassette made some last-minute changes in the way it was saved onto tape without realising it would affect our already printed listing. Thanks for your own listing, but we've already got one that will do the trick now.

So, here's the revised – and shorter! – listing which will work.

```
10 OPENOUT"D":MEMORY 4999:CLOSEOUT
20 |TAPE.IN:LOAD"":POKE 42558,201:CALL 42544
30 SAVE"COV",B,5000,37544,10887:|DISC
```

All you have to do is place a formatted disk in your drive, and the cassette, rewound to the start of side A, in your cassette-player. Type in and RUN the listing above. You should get a prompt on screen to 'Press Play, then any key.' Do this, and the tape should load. You will get a single message on screen 'Loading Covenant block 1'. When the program has loaded it should be saved automatically onto your disc and you will get the READY prompt on screen.

Now you can run the program from disc at any time by simply typing: RUN"COV.

Rave goes missing

To get the grovelling over and done with I must say how great AA is. Now that's finished I think I must get straight to the point. In May's great issue (grovel, grovel, slurp!) you reviewed *Tomahawk*, and gave it 92% – BUT NO AA RAVE! Has Toot run off with it, we ask. Could it even be that Ed gave up early? This is not all the moaning though – £9.95 cass and £14.95 *cass* should prove my point!

Nothing more to moan about and my Mum is beating her head against the wall (symptoms of lack of typewriting) so I will finish by saying how good your maggy is (I must kick the habit).

Robert Padley
Hythe, Kent

Two fair cops there, Robert. The AA Rave sticker got left off – or fell off at some point. And, yes, it should of course be £14.95 disk. Thanks for sending us the spare sticker – unfortunately we've now redesigned the AA Rave logo. Don't worry too much about the grovelling – we like a certain amount of it.

Reliable? Not mine

I am at present on my 6th Amstrad. When I first heard that Amstrad had a good reliability record I thought, great. My thoughts now aren't so great though.

The faults consisted of: noise from telly, discs wouldn't work, disc drives wouldn't work, wave lines on television, noise from speaker, plus numerous other faults.

This said I do like my CPC 6128.

Is there anyone out there (male or female) who would like to be a pen pal?

David Knight
707 Wells Road, Whitchurch, Bristol



POWER GONE TO MY HEAD? RIDICULOUS.

Up the 464

I am the PROUD owner of an Amstrad CPC 464, which I bought just over a year ago. I feel that it has an advantage, albeit slight, over the 6128 and apparently maligned 664 in that it does have its own datacorder, thus avoiding the problem of volume/tone levels common with other computers.

P G Newman, Dungannon, Co Tyrone

Release dates

A few days ago after reading your review of *Rasputin* I rushed down to my local computer shop, cash in hand, ready to buy the game. After looking

around various shops I realised the game hadn't been released. To save future disappointment could you please display the date the game is due to be



released somewhere within the review?

G Stilwell, Uxbridge, Middx

It wouldn't be worth it. Release dates change so frequently the information would be near useless by the time it reached you.

Hiya, Birdie

I would like you to discontinue your childish behaviour and stop printing talking letters at the top of the ReAction page. Is there any point to this? Well is there?!?

I would also just like to say hello to Wayne, Paul and Birdie, my fellow pupils at school, who swore that if they ever saw their names in this magazine, then they would get rid of their Speccy's and buy Arnolds.

Riaz Ali, Cwmbran, Gwent

You expect a Spectrum owner to keep a promise?

Elusive Elite

I have written a letter of complaint to Elite and I wondered whether you agree. In the letter I asked why *Commando* was converted to the C16 before the Arnold when the ad in the magazines stated that the game would be available for Amstrads with no mention of the C16. And where is *Scooby Doo*? And why was *International Basketball* scrapped?

Peter Chandler, London

Not to mention Kokotoni Wilf which even got as far as being sent to magazines for review before it was binned. Or Roller Coaster which has been advertised but is yet to be released. I think Elite would be first to admit they haven't really got their act together yet as far as the Amstrad micros are concerned. At least they had the sense to drop programs when they saw they weren't up to scratch. Of the games you mention only Commando is going to be released, along with Bombjack – look out for our reviews.

Barren & dreary

I have stuck with you from Issue 1, as it was unlike all the other computer drivel about at the time. It was a well written, colourful, childish, informative and occasionally witty magazine with a thoughtful layout, and as such appealed to me no end.

In some things you've got better and better, such as The Pilgrim's column and giving away free cassettes (naturally). But I have a few complaints to make.

First, your reviewing system. Do all the opinions in reviews have to be identical? I thought the point of having three different opinions was to have three different views, but there's absolutely no point if they all agree.

As for the Green Screen View, this depends mainly on what everyone else thought. Sometimes it sails a bit too close to the wind by not actually telling you what the screen looks like. For example, if there is some dreadful Bridge game the GSV will read along the lines of 'I suppose the screen is OK, but the game isn't worth playing.' But a good game:'the graphics are a little weak on the shading, and mono takes way the full multi-colored effect, but the game is so marvellous it doesn't matter.' The latter refers to the extremely crawly review of *Get Dexter*.

On the subject of the free games cassette – great. No-one can complain about that – *The Covenant* free along with demos of other games from PSS. A marvellous chance to play the excellent *Swords and Sorcery* and the other dreary French releases.

Which brings me to the extremely crawly reviews of those dreadful French games, which border on being too tedious to play. From your reviewer's attitude you'd swear every other game to date had been along the lines of *Bridge It* and the French were the first to invent moving furniture. *Doomsday Blues* is a barren dreary game with very few graphics and nothing to do. The 'graphic perfection' on *Get Dexter* was vastly inferior to *Sorcery*, *Strangeloop*, *Batman* etc.



These games got such good reviews that it's obvious you were thanking PSS for selling your magazine. You criticise the excellent *Fairlight* and *Batman* for no reason whatsoever.

James Harrison
Swansea

Those French games got such good reviews because they're such good games. It's as simple as that. If you look at avery other review of Get Dexter you'll see that everyone else thinks it's a great game as well. And they're not giving away PSS games on their covers, are they? I would have thought that after reading AA since the beginning you'd realise we're not up for sale.

As for GSViews, they are mostly very short and say only whether or not the game is playable. That's what they are there for. Criticise Batman 'for no good reason'? We gave it a 93% rating, for goodness sake.

Second Opinions are quite often going to be similar in tone – most people tend to agree on what is, or isn't, a good game. But every now and then someone violently disagrees with the main reviewer – and says so.



An unanswerable question

In a recent competition you asked for the value of Mach 1 in m.p.h. At first this would seem quite straight-forward since the Mach number is the ratio of true airspeed to the speed of sound in the medium in which the object is travelling. Thus all there was to do was to find the speed of sound.

Confidently I set about the task, looking in a dictionary. This quoted a figure of 775mph. Not satisfied, I looked to the Encyclopedia Britannica. However I found a value of 750mph. This confused me.

In the local library I found a book called Ground Studies for Pilots. Surely this would give me the right answer. I quote from this book: 'In standard conditions the speed of sound is 661 knots at sea level.' I duly converted this to 721mph and was shocked to find yet another value.

I read further and came across a formula which suggests that the temperature of the medium affects the value of the Mach number. Truly confused I looked to my trusty schoolboys encyclopedia. You guessed – I found another formula, this one even more complicated than the last suggesting that it was also affected by the medium's pressure, density and specific heat capacity.

Finally I decided to do some calculating for myself. Using my Chemistry data book I found the speed of sound in air at standard temperature and pressure to be 331.1 m/s. I converted this to 741mph and that's what I entered in the competition, although I doubt whether this corresponds with your figure.

So you see, the speed of sound in air depends on temperature, density, heat capacity and height above sea level. Please, please could you put the record straight and tell me what you think??

Roy Smith, Cranbrook, Kent

Our gaseous medium correspondent replies: The situation isn't quite as complicated as you imply – the speed of sound actually depends only on the air temperature (although varying temperatures also mean varying pressures and air densities – hence that second, alternative formula). Having said that it has to be admitted that this competition question was a complete botch-up, the second in a promising tradition of AA competition botch-ups (remember Cauldron?)

In a craven attempt to shift the blame I'll reveal that the question was not penned by any of the existing AA team, but rather by our disgraced former editor Peter Connor. Tracked down to his comfortable padded room at Broadmoor he could offer no explanation as to how the bungle slipped through.

Anyway, the competition minions have been instructed to select the competition winners from among all entries with answers ranging between 500 and 1000mph.

OK?



Shame on you

Well, where were you all? I travelled down to Manchester last weekend to the Northern Amstrad Computer Show, and there was no sign of you anywhere. Shame on you! I'd hazard a guess that there were many others of your readers who were equally disappointed – so what went wrong?

In the event you missed what can only be described as a shambles of a show and Database Publications deserve only brickbats and barbed wire for their poor organisational abilities.

They vastly underestimated the strength of interest with the result that New Century Hall was packed to the gunwales and no one was able to see much of anything. As a simulation of exiting Old Trafford after a soccer match, it was perfect.

As for children and the disabled it would have taken a miracle for them to see anything at all. To call such a melee a show is a travesty. An analogy would be for Marks and Spencer to call their stores a Consumer Goods Show and charge £3 for the privelege of shopping there.

The organisers were made well aware of my feelings and they refunded the cost of the tickets – any other dissatisfied customers take note.

P G Worrall, Ayr

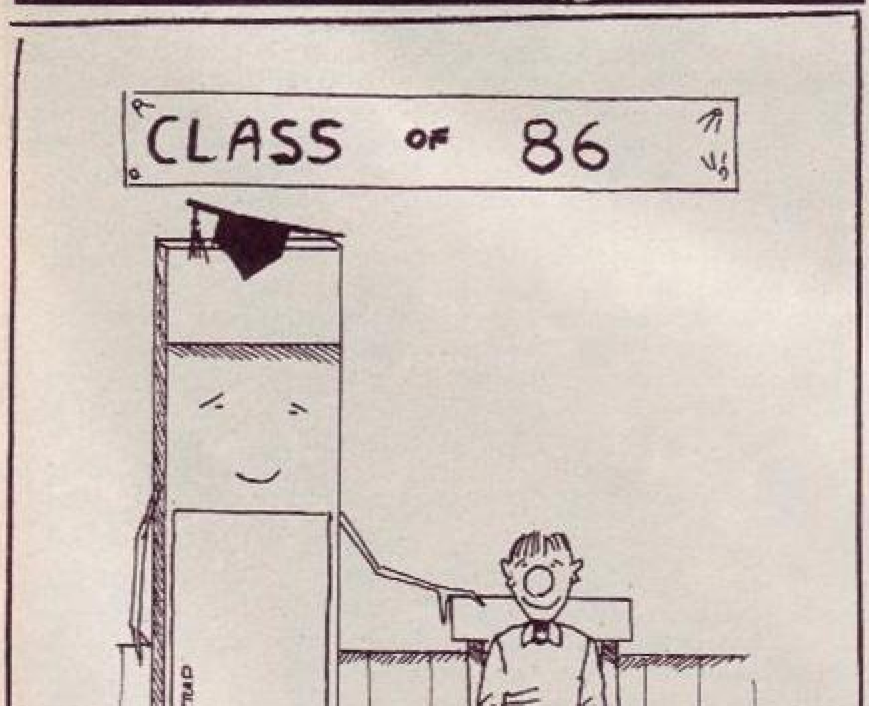
I think you're being a bit harsh. Every successful computer exhibition I've ever been to has been crowded. The next writer enjoyed it anyway.

On Saturday, like hundreds of other people I went to the computer show in Manchester expecting to see you, but where were you? I spent half the time looking for you and the other half spending my dad's money. Overall the show was very good (mainly because everything was so cheap) – but it was too hot!

Adam Scott, Chorley, Lancs

We were sorry not to be there en masse, honest we were, but it fell the weekend before our final press deadlines – it was all we could do to get a report on it! And if you think the Manchester show was hot, you should have been at the Novotel in January – that was murder.





Arnold v. wife

I bought *They Sold a Million* through your discount section, but *Beach Head* appears to have a bug. When I select 'Fair' and win through to the beach assault with two tanks, the screen appears with about 200 tanks all over and the tank sound, then a crash. This repeats and the program restarts. Can you help?

Also, could you give any hints how to get your wife interested in computers as she is seriously affecting my progress on games. She constantly shouts down my ear 'You do nothing in this house since you got that except make a mess with tapes and magazines all over the place, BLA, BLA, BLA, BLA, etc.'

J Gilmour
Manchester

I can't help you on Beach Head – it's a bug which is present on other copies of the disk.

Your wife problem sounds much more serious. They don't like mess, do they? Maybe you could try pointing out that your Amstrad is much tidier than other home computers, having only a single mains plug. There again, maybe you could try tidying up. Better yet would be to actually get her interested in the thing. Why not invest in an adventure – say *Red Moon* from Level 9? Wives seem more likely to enjoy adventures than mindless, aggressive games like *Beach Head*.

I await suggestions from other readers, especially wives, with interest.

Long-lasting Amstrads

I would like to reply to M K Gill's letter from your April issue (complaining of Amstrad unreliability). One of my brother's friends has owned a 464 since Christmas 1984 and in all this time he has not had any problems with it. Since anything he owns is lucky to survive more than six months I am extremely impressed with the computer's performance, as I know it hasn't been treated any better than any of his other stuff. However, his Amstrad joysticks haven't lasted quite as well, mainly due to a few games on *DT's Decathlon*.

I myself have owned a 6128 since last Christmas and it still performs as well as it did the first time it was switched on despite several months of almost constant use.

Stephen Jones, Boston, Lincs

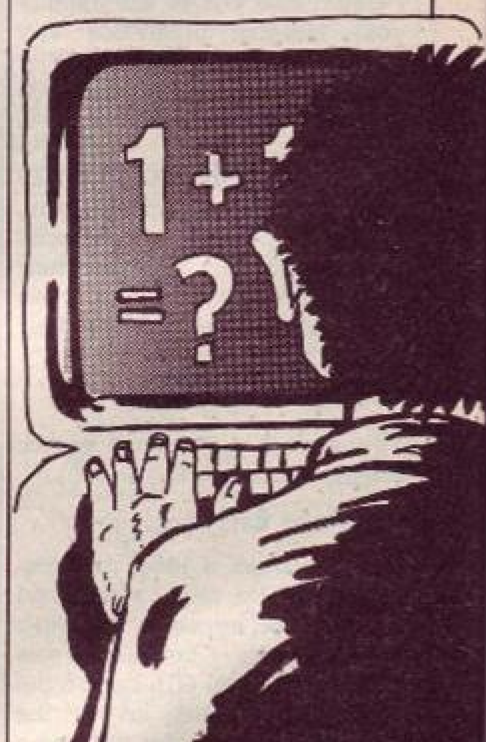
Poor old M K Gill phoned us again the other day to say his machine had broken down yet again – a seventh time!

No good at Maths

I have met a lot of people who do not want to buy a computer because 'I'm no good at Maths.' Well, I have been crazy about computers for the last five years, owned the ZX-81 and now the 464 and am a reasonably good programmer, and yet all I have is O level Maths and am a law student. You can't be more thick at Maths than that.

To anyone who hasn't yet tasted what computing is about may I assure them that it is the most fascinating and cheapest of pastimes...YES cheapest! After all you can spend the equivalent of *Exploding Fist* in one round of drinks in the pub.

Francis F Silva
Rayleigh, Essex



You confirm what I've always believed. Lawyers, with or without O level Maths can never get things to add up. Andrew Wilton's an ex-law student, and you should see his expense claims.

Roland says no

Please can you do an Amsyclopedia of Roland games because there are so many I've lost count.

Mario Theodosiou
Hove, Sussex

Bob Wade says you must be out of your mind.

Tries hard, could do better

Having bought/subscribed to AA since its inception I feel the time has come to congratulate you on a job well done. Issue 1 now rates 5 out 10, although (for lack of comparison), I thought it better at the time. The latest issue, 7, is 7 overall. Nearly every change has been for the better and I now read the magazine cover to cover, with the single exception of Voice of the People.

What happened to the other 3 marks? Well, obviously prejudice plays a part; as one who is the wrong (?) side of 40, I find the bulk of the artwork is either pointless (eg page 46 in issue 7) or far too juvenile. The AA Rave insignia seems objectionable for both these reasons. After all, I can *see* if the overall rating given to a program is 80% or higher.

The use of colour is another thing with which I take issue. Personally I would prefer it restricted to screen shots (and to adverts where I am, presumably, not paying for it). What I object to is having to peer to see what PC, AW or BW has written. If great swathes of colour must be used, please ensure a clear contrast with the text ink.

My third criticism relates to the layout, particularly that of the reviews. Splitting pages up the way you do is clumsy and particularly irritating when more of one, or other, of the reviews is continued on the page overleaf. Of course reviews are of different lengths, but let's not even pretend the problem can't be solved; that isn't worthy of you. However, please, please don't remedy the situation by the introduction of overblown screen shots – that would make the cure worse than the disease.

Last and least let me pick out one introduction on which I am less than keen, that of Third Opinion. Even a second opinion is only of use when it says something that the main reviewer has not. On many occasions all are completely agreed, and there are more space effective ways of saying it.

Finally thank you to Sue Taylor cheerful and helpful even at nearly five in the evening. It's a pleasure doing business with you.

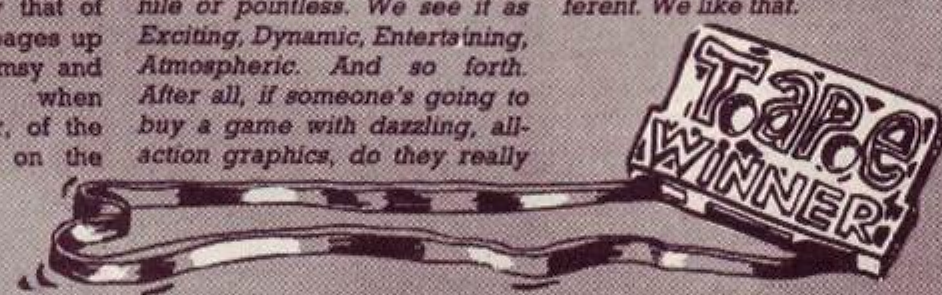
Frank Hemmings, Swindon, Wilts

We always like getting letters from people who've got intelligent comments on the magazine's presentation, as well as its content. I agree about the old AA Rave logo – you won't find it in this month's issue! But I don't think you should regard the rest of the artwork as juvenile or pointless. We see it as Exciting, Dynamic, Entertaining, Atmospheric. And so forth. After all, if someone's going to buy a game with dazzling, all-action graphics, do they really want to read about in a magazine that looks like the FT?

Similar arguments lead us to use plenty of colour on pages where colour printing is available. In the past this has sometimes hampered readability, but I think we're learning.

Your layout criticism is more controversial. Certainly it's possible to have nice neat layouts in which all reviews fit exactly onto one or two pages. But only by artificially cutting them down or padding them out. We prefer a more flexible approach in which the layout fits the review rather than vice versa.

There is a clear logic to our system. Raves and other important games always get laid out in a neat, boxed off panel whose size depends largely on the length of the review. Less important reviews get laid out in columns which may run over a page turn if necessary. Once again they can be longer or shorter depending purely on the merit of the game. As well as being more flexible and therefore more efficient on use of space, this system has the advantage of avoiding endless identical layouts. Each month's AA Action Test pages look different. We like that.



Rapid repair

I am writing to tell your readers of some quite exceptionally good service. One of the problems associated with the very high reliability of the Amstrad range of computers is that it is hardly worthwhile to set up an elaborate network of repair facilities. Unfortunately even the 6128 does break down occasionally and this happened to me.

I contacted Amsoft who had supplied me with my machine at a discount for software development purposes and was told that as I had bought the machine at a discount, no guarantee was offered. I was eventually offered repair but it would take 3-4 weeks! 'Try Comet', they said. I did. 'Six weeks,' they said. 'We send them to Amstrad for repair.' Great!

Eventually taking pity on me in my screams of agony, they suggested I might like to contact Dictaphone Ltd of Leamington Spa. It appears they have just instituted an Amstrad Hotline, and when I phoned them they said that in principle they could repair within 24 hours. I left my machine with them, and true to their word it was repaired quickly. The price was a very reasonable fixed fee of £11.50.

This service is in such contrast to that offered by Amsoft that I feel those whose machines are out of guarantee might well like to make a note of the name of a company which is helpful, efficient and whose prices are fair.

Ian Hoare, London

You're not a share-holder, by any chance?



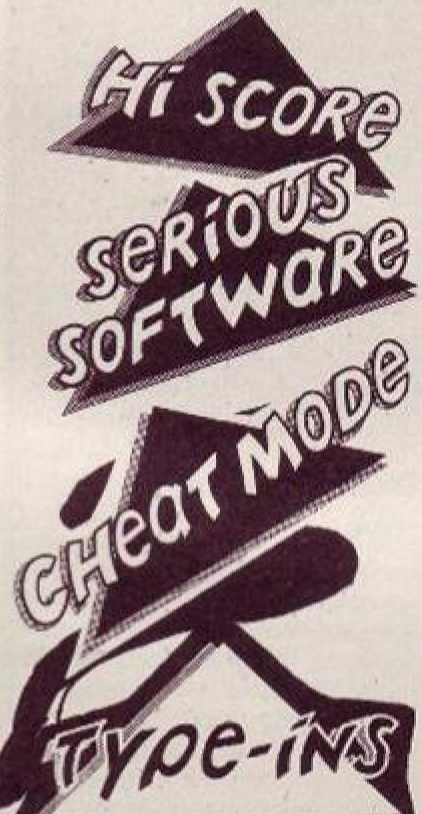
VERY IMPRESSIVE, BUT DOES IT MAKE THE TEA?

Eight points

The magazine is quite good, but I think there's room for improvement.

1. Cut out the high score table because tons of people cheat by exagerrating their score or by using cheat methods.
2. Serious Software is quite good, but please don't expand it too much or it will dominate the magazine.
3. You have gone crazy over different opinions – the two opinions are almost the same and taking up a lot of space which could be used for some detail about the game.
4. Cheat Mode and Green Screen View are crackers of ideas.
5. Have a review of books for the Amstrad and recommend one or two of them.
6. Why don't you have a hardware mail order service?
7. Keep the listings of programs short and don't use too much room for them.
8. I am thinking of getting a printer. Would AMX Mouse allow me to make a little magazine like it showed on the television program Micro Live?

Simon Shemilt
Swansea, W Glamorgan



I disagree with you about High Score – the vast majority we print are genuine, and if you think one isn't, you can challenge it. We like the section because it gives game-players a target to aim at. Ditto the opinions. They're the bits I read first of all.

As for your last query, yes, if you bought the AMX Mouse plus AMX Pagemaker program you should be able to produce a mini magazine, although its printed quality will depend very much on the printer you get.



PROBLEM ATTIC

Your loftier questions answered.

D-I-Y marketing

Please please please do an article on marketing software. I have just left school and wish to start making and selling my own games. I wish to know about copyright and how to make adverts to put in a magazine. Also could you tell me how I would do a cassette cover (full colour)? And could I draw it myself? And where do you get them printed?
David Gibbon, Beardpark, Co Durham

If you're a talented programmer you'll almost certainly do better by persuading one of the existing software houses to market your games for you. It's getting tougher and tougher for one-man outfits to compete – apart from anything else you need a fair bit of money to get yourself launched. For example, a full page colour advert in AA would cost around £700. And the days when people could make a fortune by placing a small mail order ad have long gone, I'm afraid...

Columns of text

I find *Tasword 6128* more than adequate for most of my needs, but is there a word-processor capable of handling text set out in columns such as in magazines?
L B Lee, Torbay, Devon

Your best bet is one of the new page makeup programs – either AMX Pagemaker *from Advanced Memory Systems or* Fleet Street Editor *from Mirrorsoft. These should allow you to take an article written on a word-processor and lay it out on screen exactly as you wish, possibly combining it with graphics. You'll ther be able to dump the entire screen to a printer. Look out for our reviews.*

Screen Wobble

I have just read the letter 'Breakdown saga' in your April edition. I too have had problems with Amstrad but with the green screen rather than the computer. We purchased the complete package a year ago with a view to using it for business. After a few months we noticed that all the print was moving up and down. Wrote to Amstrad for their advice but the only help they gave was that on the earlier models a shield was missing which was rectified later.

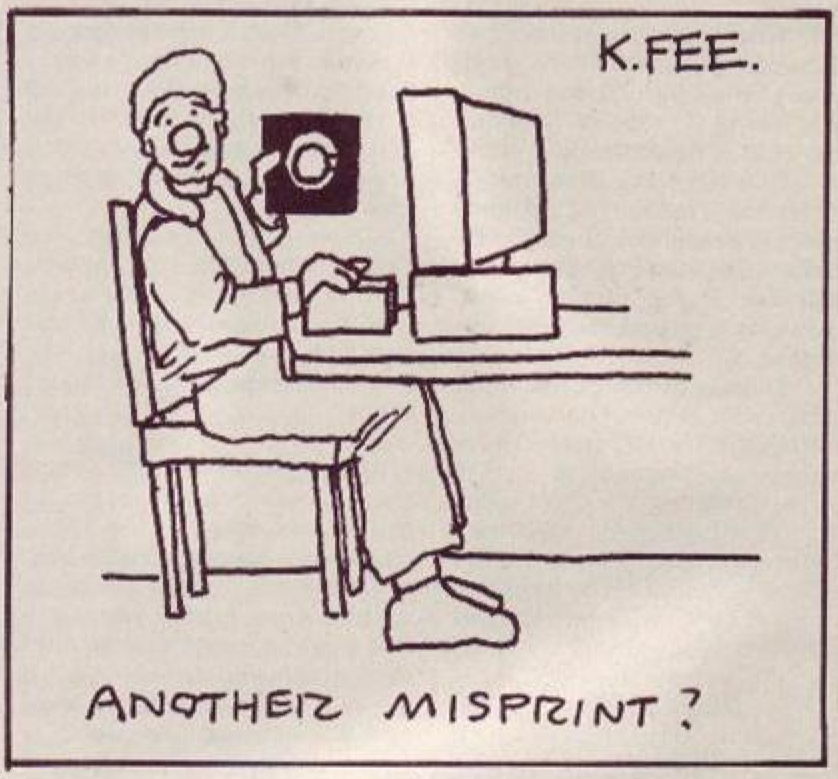
That was no help to me, so I returned to the shop where I bought it and explained the problem. They returned the monitor to Amstrad which resulted in considerable inconvenience to me and after several weeks of fruitlessly asking what was happening, the shop exchanged my monitor. Now several months later, the same thing is happening again. Anyone else had this problem?
Jean Ralph
Bodmin, Cornwall

Yes, my own 6128 screen is gently waving at me as I write this reply! It happens from time to time on all four green-screen Amstrad monitors we have in the office, although to be fair we've only found it to be a minor irritation. It's apparently caused by fluctuations in the mains supply which, on a more expensive computer, would be better protected against.

Frustrated with Spellbound

Your magazine has matured considerably since the earlier issues, enough to persuade me to take out a subscription, which is quite an achievement as I am a Mum. My normal reading material is Womans Own, etc!

Having been very frustrated with *Spellbound* you can imagine my delight at seeing the Poke in issue 7 for infinite strength. I carefully typed this in, but despite trying several times retyping and rerunning I keep getting 'Type mismatch in line 30', or if I press Ctrl and small Enter keys to run, I get 'Memory full'. I am rather a novice at this, so could you please explain what is wrong.
Lynn Murnaghen
Maidstone, Kent



Pressing the Ctrl and small Enter keys is only for loading and running a program from a cassette. You can't use it to run a program already typed or loaded into the computer's memory. It's therefore not the right way to run a Poke listing. You should just enter: **RUN**.

The error you are getting does not mean the mistake is in line 30. On the contrary, you've almost certainly made a mistake in typing in the DATA statement (line 60). Probably you have entered a letter 'O' instead of the number zero at some point. Or the letter 'L' instead of the number 1. (The line contains neither of those two letters.) Future listings we print will have zeros printed with a diagonal slash to distinguish them from letter 'O's.

Doing without a joystick

Can you enlighten me as to why several software companies (notably Virgin) produce software for joysticks only? Surely they are losing revenue, as many people like myself regard a joystick as unnecessary. Is it possible to write a Poke to use either the cursor keys or numeric pad with such software?
Christopher Lamb
Stoke Poges, Bucks



There are combinations of keys which will simulate joystick movements and can be applied in any game – although you may find it hard to adapt to them. For example if you hold down together the CTRL + DEL keys you will find the following keys give responses – CLR (up), [(down),] (right), Enter or Return (down), 4 on pad (fire). There are other combinations you may prefer. They all involve holding down permanently DEL and one other key – try out Full Stop, Comma, Space, V, X, X, Z, Zero (key-pad), or Decimal point (key-pad). For each pair you will have to work out for yourself the third keys to press to give left, right, etc.

* PROBLEM ATTIC

Joyce help

I purchased the PCW 8256 a few weeks ago and am already finding Locoscript enhancing my business productivity enormously!

However I have not a clue about the computer. I know that so much can be done with it, but as yet I have not deciphered the Manual.

Is there a simple book which explains how to understand what is meant by CP/M Plus and what is expected of us to do with it? What about Dr Logo and Mallard. Is there any simple inexpensive courses to attend?

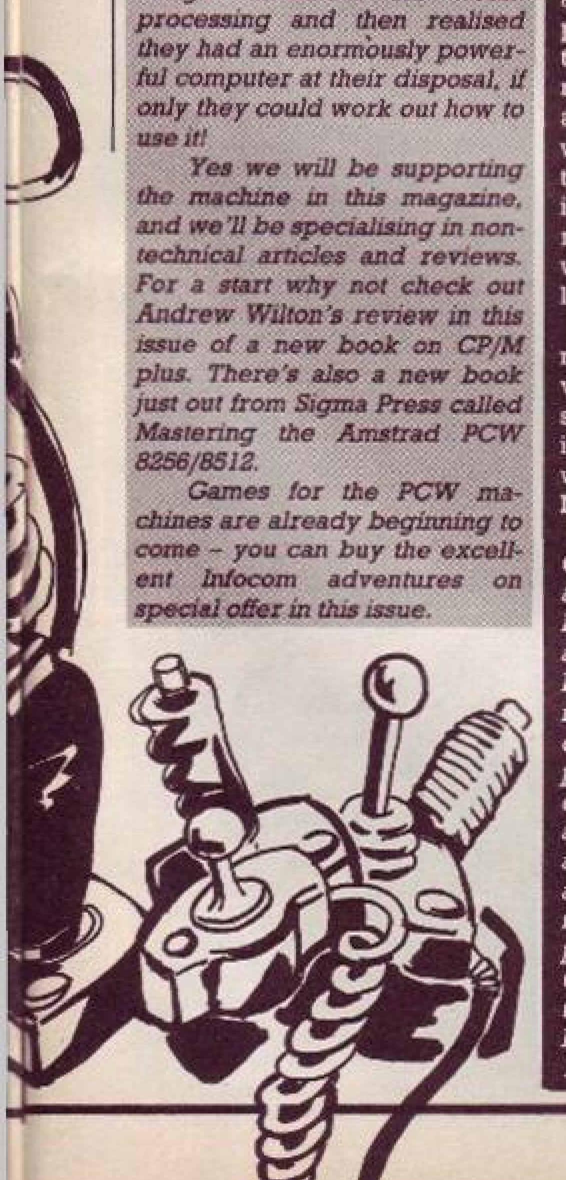
Are there not any games for PCW 8256? Can they be converted to colour in future? Are you going to have more articles on PCW 8256 to help the newcomer to the world of computer, and not assuming they already are conversant with computer?

Samandar Samari, London

Thousands of people are in exactly your situation – they bought the PCW for wordprocessing and then realised they had an enormously powerful computer at their disposal, if only they could work out how to use it!

Yes we will be supporting the machine in this magazine, and we'll be specialising in non-technical articles and reviews. For a start why not check out Andrew Wilton's review in this issue of a new book on CP/M plus. There's also a new book just out from Sigma Press called Mastering the Amstrad PCW 8256/8512.

Games for the PCW machines are already beginning to come – you can buy the excellent Infocom adventures on special offer in this issue.



Dogged with failure

I read with interest your article on the AMX Mouse package. I recently purchased the Mouse and I too was very impressed with the AMX art program. Mr Larkman failed to mention the option of dumping any drawings to a printer and I would like you to ask him if he has tried.

After spending several hours on a painstaking drawing



of my dog, I decided to dump the picture to my printer (Tatung TP100, Epson compatible). All I could get was line feed after line feed. After saving the picture I took the disc back to the shop for them to try it out for me. On three different printers, all Epson compatible, the software refused to dump the picture. On one printer, a Shinwa, it did actually start to print, but refused to line feed and the only way to obtain the picture was to line feed it by hand.

Eventually the shop offered me my money back. I think it very misleading that suppliers should advertise a product that is capable of doing something which obviously it is not.

M I Benton, Evesham, Worc

Our reviewer was certainly able to obtain a printer dump on his Citizen 120D, but other readers have had similar problems to yours. The programmers of the package say that certain 'Epson-compatible' printers are not in fact fully compatible are far as graphics are concerned. You can obtain an information sheet which will allow you to overcome the difficulty by writing direct to the programming company: Signet Computer Consultants, 4 Huntley Suite, Broadway Court, Broadway, Peterborough, PE1 1RT.

Save Our Screen

Could you please explain to me how to use the SAVE 'filename',B command. I have made up a game starring Fred but I don't know how to do a title screen.

Paul Tye, Warrington

Yes, the manual isn't very clear, is it? First write a program which puts on screen the picture or display you want. Avoid scrolling the screen at any stage as this could cause problems. Then at the end of the program include a line which has this command:

```
SAVE "Title", B, &C000, &4000.
```

This saves the screen on tape or disc together with a header which tells the computer on reloading that the data should be placed at start address &C000 (a number in Hex code which specifies the start of screen memory), and that it is of length &4000 (ie. 16K). To load in the screen use the command:

```
LOAD "!Title"
```

Which database?

At the recent Amstrad show in Manchester I nearly bought a copy of the Sage *Magic Filer* database, until the representative remembered that it would only run on the PCW 8256.

In my job as a doctor I am interested in being able to file patients' records and other fairly lengthy (and different sized) lists, such as the causes of different diseases. From my limited knowledge, this would seem to be difficult with the rather rigid 'record' and 'field' set up of most database programs, which was why Magic Filer was so appealing.

Do you know if Sage intend to bring out a similar program for the 6128, or whether there are any other moderately-priced databases of a similar nature available?

Stephen Langley, Manchester

No, Sage aren't converting it for the 6128. The most flexible 6128 database we know of is Masterfile 128 (£34.90 on disc). It allows you to have widely differing lengths and types of field in your various records. It is also a relational database, allowing 'parent and child' files which you could find useful for your 'disease causes' database. However the program holds files entirely in RAM placing a limit of 64K per file – eg. 300 records averaging 35 words each. But because it uses memory very efficiently you could find such files hold as much useful information as a 120K disc-based file on a rigid field and record database. For more details ring Campbell Systems on 01-508-5058.



Checking listings

Here's a method I find useful when typing in program listings – it's especially helpful with 255-character Data statements. I use a cassette recorder to record my voice as follows:

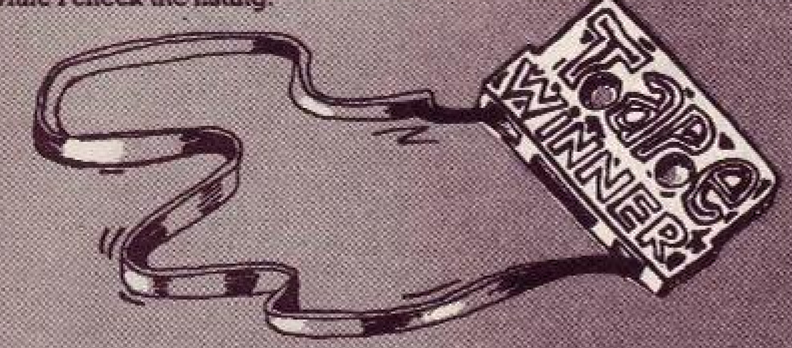
1. I read blocks of data into the recorder (at a speed to suit number 3 below).
2. The recorder reads them back to me and I check against the source.
3. The recorder reads them to me again while I use the keyboard to type in the listing.
4. The recorder reads to me while I check the listing.

NB. Like football results, use your voice to help you – the monotonous note if the next number is the same, and a hesitation as they change.

The advantage of all this is it is easier on the eyes and there is no need to imitate Noddy between the page, the screen and the keyboard.

John Duffy
Seaham, Co. Durham

Nice idea – but don't let the neighbours hear you, they'll think you're insane.



The wrong micro!

It was just before Christmas before I became a guardian of The Micro. To tell you the truth, at that time I didn't know an input from an output, and the sad part of it all was: after all my clever research into computers, marching through the streets of Exeter and surrounding towns, poking my nose into umpteen retail outlets looking for a computer to satisfy my needs at a price which wouldn't break me, I ended up by falling for a cer-



tain machine that to my utmost dismay, after searching in vain for software, was almost defunct, or at least in death throws! I was quite happy with the machine and even felt sorry for the fact that no one wanted to know its existence. However a good machine without the backup, and all that...!!

So, I marched back into town and saw your magazine on the shelf of a famous retail shop. I decided to take the plunge and see what I had missed in not buying an Amstrad.

That was it! Hooked from word one, I read through your magazine and shed a few tears! "Why didn't I buy an Amstrad?" I repeated to myself over and over, until I had a brainwave.

I packed my unfortunate machine back into its box and went back to the shop. Great! They had a CPC 464 and were willing to exchange my dying machine. So I drove home at full speed, unpacked and plugged and there to my sheer delight was a superb piece of modern technology.

Therefore, my dear friends, due to your delightful publication you made a very sad, lame computer keeper very happy.

I now also own a "Joyce" – what a fantastic machine that is! Pity about the manual though! Far from easy to understand – I wish you and your team would write a book especially for her! I managed to sort out how to use the word processor after much manual throwing and keyboard thumping, but she isn't limited to word-processing is she?

Please let's have a few more reviews for her, also any news of alternative software.

Paul G. Barton
Newton Abbot, Devon

Ahhh...don't it make you happy when they see the light? By the way, PCW owners should keep a very close eye on AA over the next few months. Big moves are afoot!



Fourth opinion

I just thought I would write to you and give you my super-brainey idea. I think that every month you should have a competition, the prize being a day out at your AA offices. The winner should also while he goes there get a chance to have a fourth opinion space on some of the games reviewed that month. If you think this is a terrible idea don't reply, but if you are interested please write back to me.

Leon Pidgeon
London

I think it's a terrible idea. How did you guess?

I am lonely

I am the only Arnold owner I know and would like to hear from any others, User groups etc in my area or anywhere else for that matter, so could you print my full address and I will welcome anyone who would care to write.

Keep Bob Wade off the cider.

Garry Hemming
17 Hillside, Dublin Rd, Antrim, BT41 4HG

Actually he drinks scrumpy

Ads are OK, OK?

For heaven's sake, stop moaning at software houses! I get fed up the back teeth with people writing in to complain about their adverts for games a couple of months before they come out. Software houses are in the business of producing software for home computers. Like any other business they have to try to obtain the biggest sales possible. So they have to advertise software well before-hand so as to increase the air of expectancy when the product finally arrives in the shops. When you think about it, it makes you appreciate it more.

But, I don't condone the abysmal record of software houses where it concerns *incredibly* late software – Dambusters, Hyper Sports, Impossible Mission, etc, especially when they had obligations to Amstrad Action itself.

From one controversy to another. I get fed up with feeble excuses from Amsoft concerning the supply of 3" disks. I can't believe them when they say that they're importing 100,000 a month and that somebody's stockpiling them. When Mr Sugar chose to use 3" drives he should have sorted out the disk supply.

One last moan, this time for Amstrad Action! What about disk games in Cheat Mode? You can't use hardly any of the Pokes you print for the relevant disk game. The last straw came with the T.S.A.M. Jet Set Willy poke which I have on disk. Help!

Otherwise, the mag is great.

James Watson, Bristol

I don't think many software houses DELIBERATELY advertise games months in advance of release. They have to make decisions on whether to place an advertisement at least a month before the ad will actually appear. So sometimes they'll book ads and then run into programming or production difficulties which delay the release of the games – occasionally for several months! Where this happens, they've probably lost much of the value of the early advertising.

I agree with your comments about 3" disks – the shortage has caused enormous problems for a lot of people.

As for disk-game Pokes, we'll print 'em if we get 'em.

Heavy on the Magick



CONVERSATIONS WITH APEX



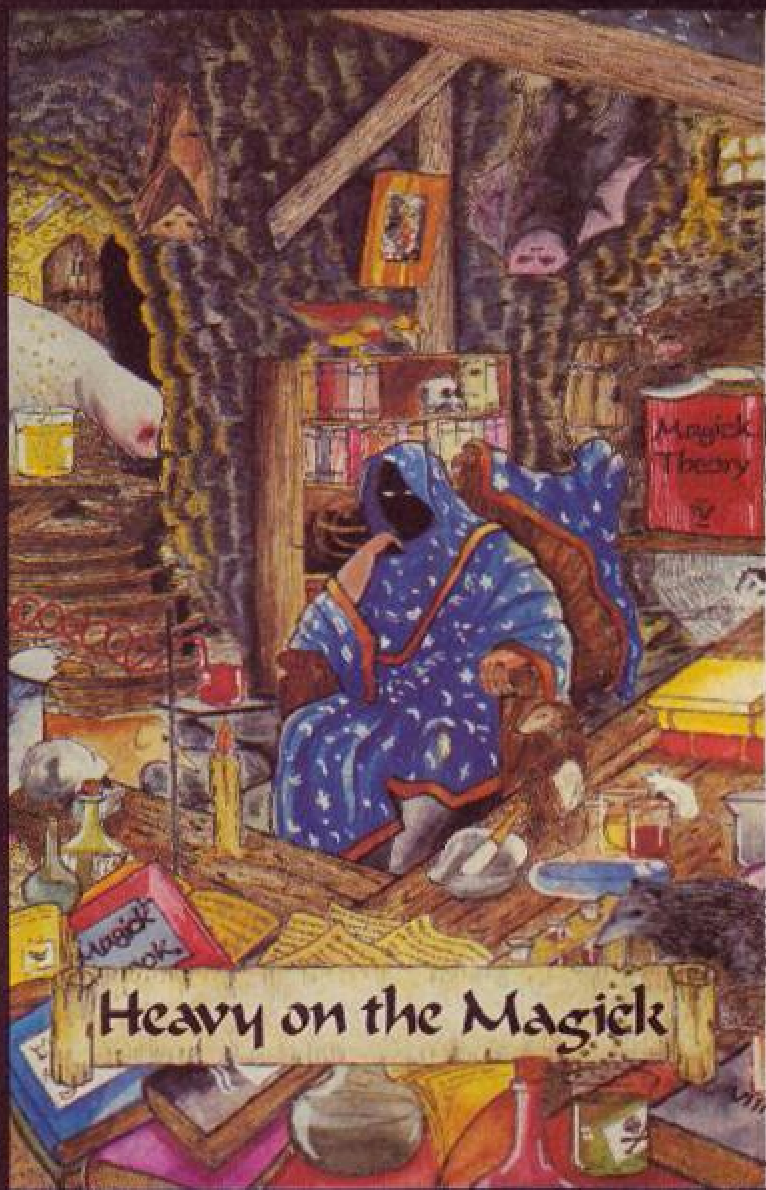
THE DOUBT OF RABAK



OLD TROLL!



BEFORE THE GATES OF WOLFDORP



SCREEN SHOTS FROM THE SPECTRUM VERSION



BEWARE OF THE WEREWOLF!



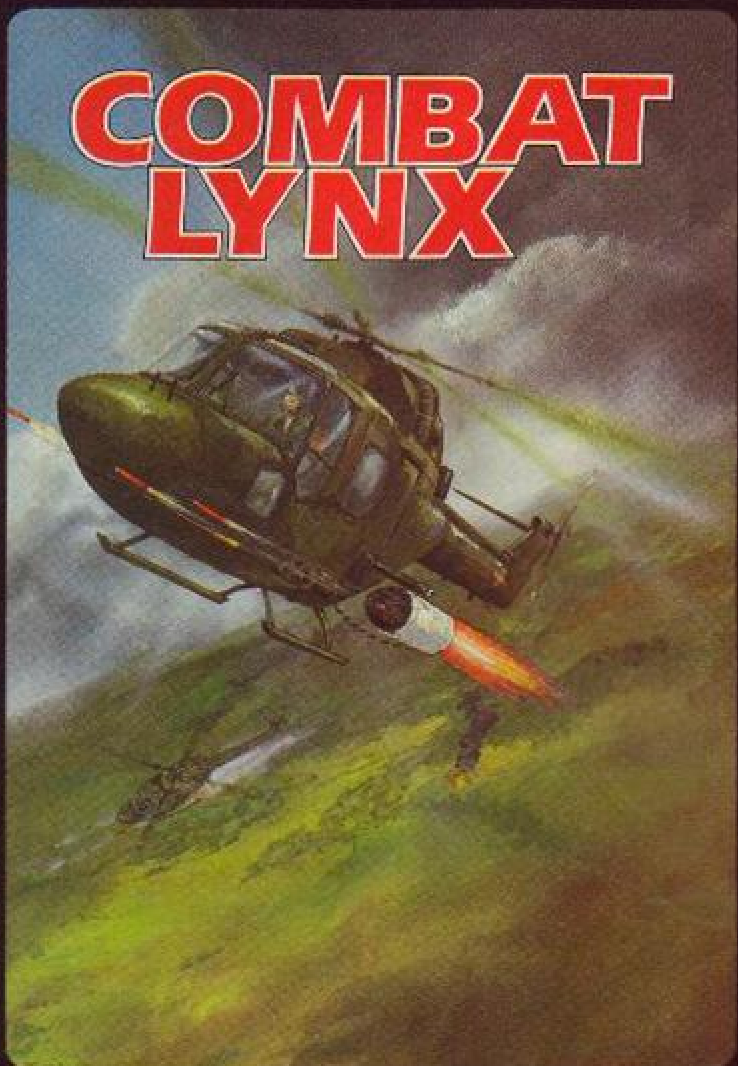
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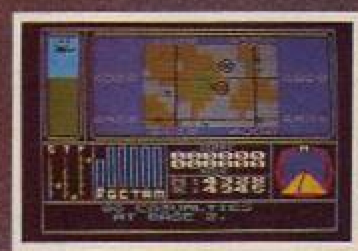


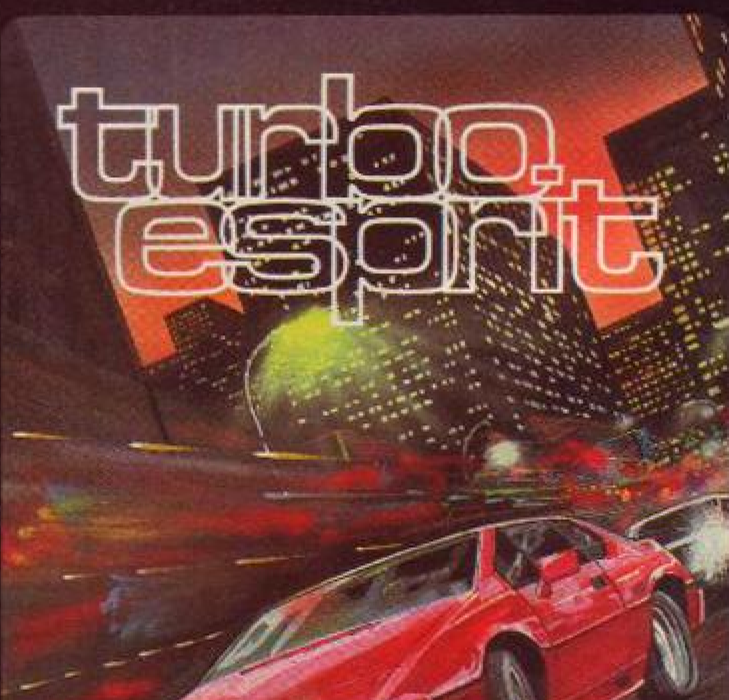
COMBAT LYNX (Air-to-ground Battle Simulation)

Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95
BBC/Electron	£8.95

"Combat Lynx is both simulation and shoot-em-up games in one. The 3D effect created by using contour line graphics tends to give it a more technical feel, so more like a simulation, but on the other hand there are lots of jets and enemy helicopters whizzing around and ground forces shooting at you which gives the game its instant playability appeal. Once you get the hang of coping with everything, it's possible to play a game of high strategy which involves not only arcade skills but those of forward planning. For people who enjoy strategy type games, Combat Lynx should provide hours of fun, while for those who prefer something instant and fast - choose skill level 4 and hang onto your hats! Generally the graphics are most impressive, with a few attribute problems when objects are about to become hidden, but these are minor in what is otherwise an engaging and challenging game."







TURBO ESPRIT (3D Simulation Car Chase)

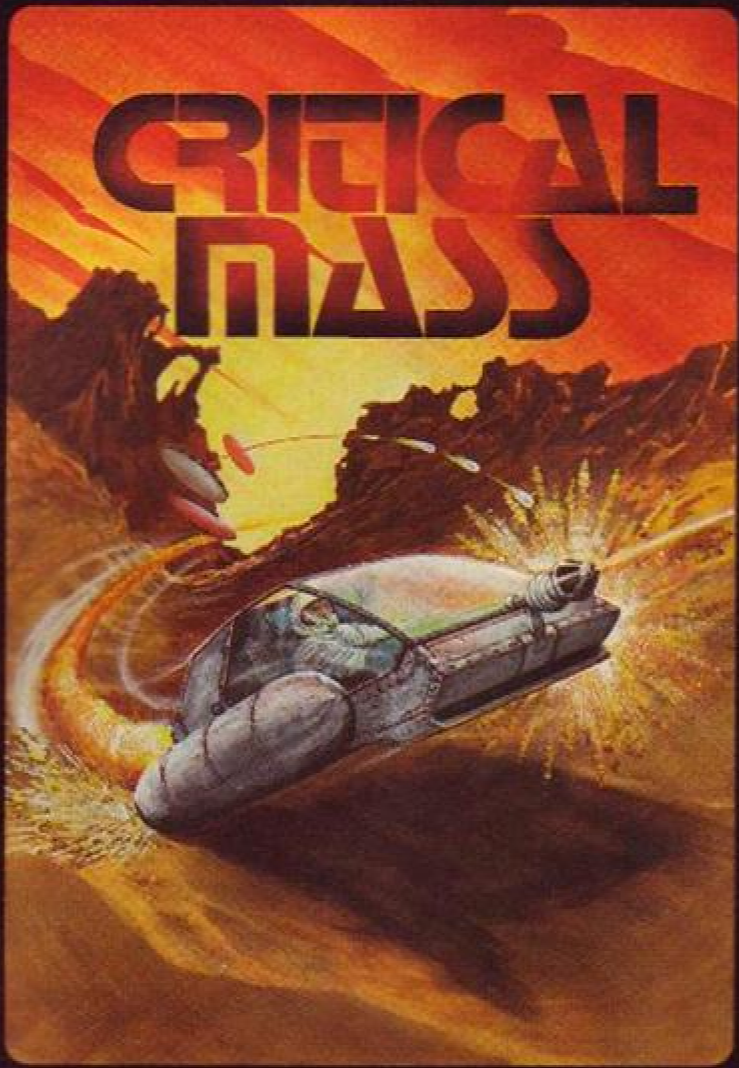
Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95

You are a special agent equipped with a Lotus Turbo Esprit. An international ring of drug smugglers are about to make a huge delivery of heroin, and must be stopped at all costs. The drugs are stored at a number of houses in the city, and will be taken by cars to an armoured van which will be cruising around the centre. A raid on the van before completion of the delivery would leave some of the drugs in circulation. Similarly a raid on any of the houses would alert them to your squad's activities. You must therefore try and pick-off the cars one by one before they make their drop, and then try to stop the van before it escapes. The delivery cars will be backed-up by 'hit' squads - so watch out!

(Developed with the support of Lotus Cars Ltd)







CRITICAL MASS (Arcade)

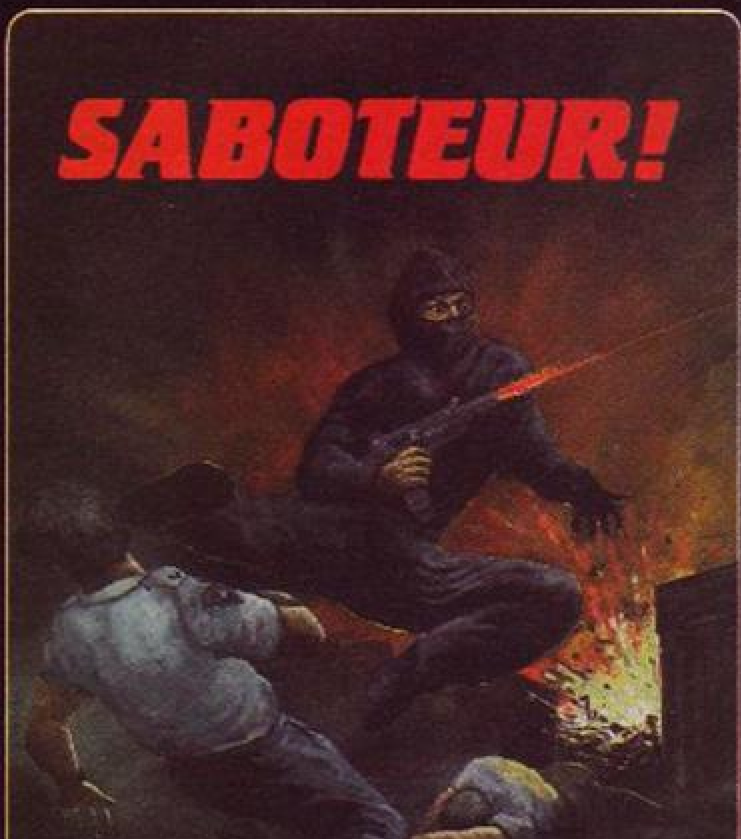
Spectrum 48k £8.95
Commodore 64 £8.95
Amstrad 464/6128 £8.95

An outlying system of the Terra Federation has set up an advanced anti-matter conversion plant on a centrally positioned asteroid to supply the local colonists with energy. A surprise attack by alien forces has successfully overcome the asteroid's defences and the aliens are now threatening to self-destruct the power plant unless the colonists offer an unconditional surrender. The self-destruction process would effectively turn the power plant into a massive black hole that would wipe out the entire planetary system along with a number of nearby stars. Unconditional surrender offers an equally horrific prospect. Your mission is to infiltrate the enemy position and disable the anti-matter plant before the aliens achieve CRITICAL MASS.

"This is the biz!......The graphics and playability of this game are superb, making it well worth the money."







SABOTEUR (Martial Arts Arcade Adventure)

Spectrum 48k £8.95
Amstrad 464/6128 £8.95
Commodore 64 £8.95

You are a highly skilled mercenary trained in the martial arts. You are employed to infiltrate a central security building which is disguised as a warehouse. You must steal a disk that contains the names of all the rebel leaders before its information is sent to the outlying security stations. You are working against the clock, both in getting to the disk, and in making your escape. You must enter the building from the sea by rubber dinghy, and will then only be able to leave by the helicopter on the roof. You will have to find your way around the warehouse, making use of the guards' own weapon supplies in your struggle through overwhelming odds.

"Saboteur is without a doubt one of the best arcade games I've seen for a long time and a welcome departure from the plethora of licenced/endorsed product that the industry seems to currently favour. Recommended."





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Someone needs to return all the artefacts and recover the time machine before everything literally ceases to exist. That someone is you.

Be warned, you will need to use every trick of the un-armed combat skills you learned on old earth if you are to defeat his cyborgs and survive the perils that await you in the past.

Only then can you restore.....

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AMSCENE

The 464 thousand dollar question

Amstrad's remarkable purchase of Sinclair has raised a question mark over the future of the Amstrad machine which started it all – the CPC 464.

Amstrad's chairman Alan Sugar has made clear that computers marketed under the Sinclair name will be aimed at the entertainment market, while the Amstrad name will cover more serious-minded machines. This division does not readily accommodate the strong-on-entertainment, cassette-based 464. And its position appears further jeopordised by Amstrad's plans to relaunch the Sinclair Spectrum this autumn with a built in cassette player.

Industry observers also believe that Amstrad have had far greater sales success with the 6128 and the PCW machines than with the 464 and that this has lessened their support for the machine. Virgin Software's Nick Alexander spoke for many when he told us: "I would be quite surprised if the 464 continues much longer."

He added that he would be sad to see it go as it was currently a lot less economic and a lot more problematic selling Amstrad software on disc than on tape, a view shared by Firebird's Herbie Wright. "We like the 464 and we like selling Amstrad cassettes," he said.

Amstrad themselves have denied that there will be any change in their attitude to the 464. They also deny rumours that 464 imports have already been curtailed.

One Amstrad executive commented: "Why drop a machine which is making us money?"

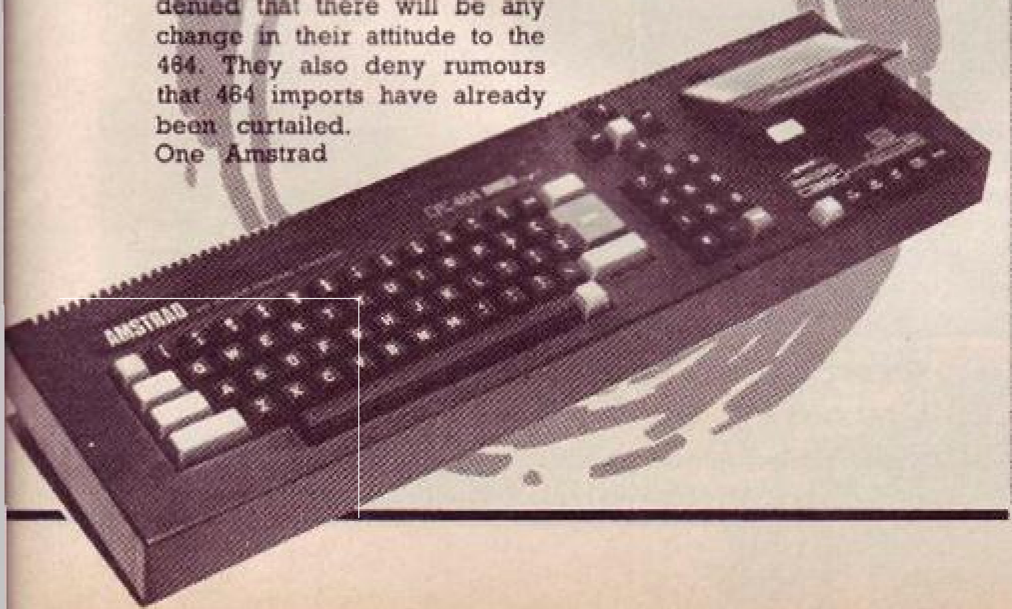
Other observers feel the company are still largely undecided on the full consequences of the Sinclair buy out, which by all accounts was worked out extremely quickly. One story has it that Alan Sugar was on holiday when the negotiations with Sinclair started, and that when contacted he authorised his "pocket money" bid of £5m expecting it to be rejected. It wasn't.

Whatever the details, the fact is that for an astonishingly small figure – just a single month's profit – Amstrad has gobbled up the UK's biggest computer manufacturer and placed itself very firmly in the number 1 slot. The move appears to indicate that Alan Sugar is now firmly committed to sticking with computers for the forseeable future, a relief to those who feared he might pull out of the market as quickly as pulled out of CB radio.

What remains to be seen is how the Sinclair and Amstrad brand names are to be used in future months.







Does he really like Spectrums?

The Sugarman cartoon in this month's issue has our hero saying he bought up Sinclair because he liked the computers so much. This should be regarded as poetic licence.

The fact is that in the past Sugar has been very disparaging of Sinclair and his products, referring to them for example as "a boffin's ego-trip". And at the press conference which broke the news of the deal between the companies he continued to heap criticism on Sinclair machines, despite the presence of Sir Clive sitting next to him. The areas he feels they're particularly weak in are reliability and the way they've been marketed – Amstrad will give top priority to remedying these points.

The reason for the purchase is less to do with liking the machines than the fact that Sinclair's considerable problems meant the company could be bought for a snip.

Many industry observers were astonished that a company which effectively created the home computer revolution in Britain could so easily be snapped up by a relative upstart. But it happened. Another remarkable chapter in the Alan Sugar story.

This week, Next week,





Amstrad owners have been badly hit by a recent even-worse-than-usual spate of software delays. Numerous titles have been held up for weeks or even months after their scheduled release dates.

Perhaps the worst example is US Gold's *Impossible Mission*. After a three-month delay a 'finished' copy was sent to American software house Epyx who licensed the game, only to have it rejected on quality grounds. Programming has effectively restarted from scratch and the game is unlikely to be released before mid-summer, almost a year after US Gold first advertised it, and six months after it was advertised as being 'out now'.

US Gold's *Dambusters* has also been long delayed, but now appears to be about to make an appearance.

But there are numerous other offenders. Where are *V* and *Street Hawke* and *Knight Rider* from Ocean? Where are Imagine's *Comic Bakery*, *Mikie* and *Green Beret*? Or English Software's *Knight Games*? Or Gremlin Graphics' *Profanation*?

Where are the Argus games *Yabba Dabba Doo* and *Max Headroom*? And what about the Ultimate titles *Gunfright* and *Cyberun* first advertised in AA at the end of last year?

One could go on, but that wouldn't leave space for all the delayed disc programs such as Amsoft's *Strangeloop Plus* and most of the Infocom adventures – Infocom's UK distributors Softsel have announced plans to release most of the rest of the range on the Amstrad inlcuding *Wishbringer* and *Sorceror*. They might do better to get out the games already promised. For example, at time of writing there is still no sign of *Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* on the 464 and 664, two months after it was due.

Other titles have been withdrawn because of bugs and then taken an agonisingly long time to resurface. In this category come the two major titles *Elite* from Firebird and *Mini Office 2* from Database Software. Both disappeared from the marketplace for over two months following the discovery of bugs soon after release.

With the Firebird offices filling up with returned cassettes as requested in an advert they placed in several magazines, the release of the new debugged version was then further delayed when the company's duplicators went bust and quantities of stock were seized by the receivers. At time of writing the situation remains unresolved – and Firebird still don't have a release date for the disc version of the game, a fact for which they blame the worldwide shortage of Amstrad 3" discs.

There's no doubt the delays have caused a huge amount of frustration among Amstrad users – as our own subscription and mail order departments can vouch.

Sometime, Never

PCW 82

Look! No interfaces

PCW owners wishing to upgrade th machines to communicate with oth computers and printers have had spend several weeks gnashing th teeth because of a desperate sh tage of the Centronics/RS 2 interface.

IQ produces Genius

Hot on the heels of *Laser Basic* and *Laser Compiler* comes the new Ocean IQ/Oasis release *Laser Genius*. It's a development package – assembler, monitor, etc – with a bit of a difference.

If you don't like getting your hands dirty with flags and stuff, the assembler can compile high-level language expressions to handle conditions and the like. Another real stroke of originality – if not genius – was the inclusion of a Forth-type language in the monitor, just to control single stepping and the like. Add to this a screen editor that uses line numbers, and we're clearly looking at something a bit different.

We'll be reviewing the package in full next issue, but any impatient code freaks reading this can buy it for £14.95 cassette or £19.95 on disk. There should also be a ROM version available soon, but there's no price for that as yet.

Tasman take on LocoScript

Tasman are moving into the 8256/8512 market with their new *Tasword 8000* word processor. It may not be the first Locoscript-substitute to hit the streets, but it is a little different from the rest.

The difference is that *Tasword 8000* is PCW only – it is not a CP/M program. This allows it to make much better use of the machine's hardware. In particular it makes the most of all that lovely memory, and uses the full 90x32 screen area.

Tasman's Robin Thomson claimed that there had been considerable demand for the program. "A lot of Tasword users now have PCWs, and want a version of the program that runs on their new machines", he said. Tasman will probably be producing more Joyce software in the near future, he added.

The package, which includes built-in mail merge, will be premiering at the Amstrad User Show, price £24.95.

Caxton plan to sort you out

Caxton's latest release, *Condor 1*, is a database and reporting system for the PCW 8256 and 8512. It's supposed to be sophisticated but extremely easy to use.

The product comes from the American software house Condor Computing Systems, who've been doing very good business with it. Sales in the States over the whole Condor range run to 150,000 plus, but it's had no real impact this side of the Atlantic – up till now, that is.

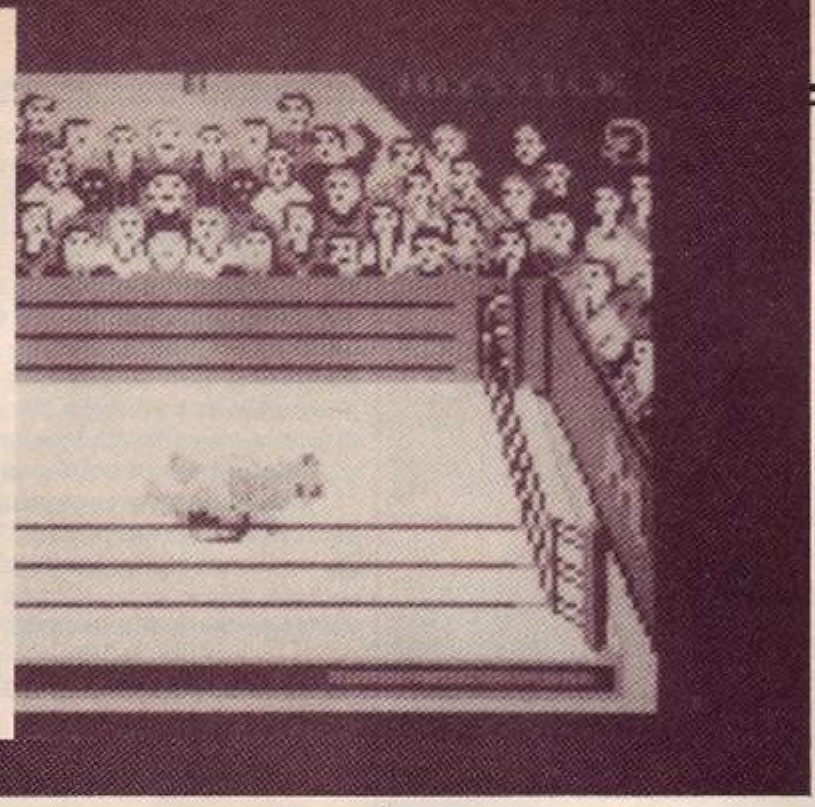
The package is due out towards the end of May, and we plan to have a full review next issue. The price will be £99.95 inc. VAT, so you'd better start saving up right now.

Violence on screen

Melbourne House's new *Rock 'n' Wrestle* is another combat game from the team that brought you *Way of the Exploding Fist*. Unlike *Fist*, however, *R'n'W* claims to be "truly 3 dimensional".

As ace wrestler Gorgeous Greg, you take on such world class opponents as Vicious Vivian, Molotov Mick and Bad Barney Trouble. There are over 25 different moves you can use against them, including the aeroplane spin, the turnbuckle fly and the atomic drop.

The game topped the charts in its original C64 incarnation, but it remains to be seen whether Arnold owners are such a violent lot.



Active Activision

Activision have a busy month or two ahead of them on the Amstrad front. As well as the Lucasfilms duo *Koronis Rift* and *Eidolon*, you can expect to see *RMS Titanic*, *Tempest*, *Mermaid* and a French soccer game from Loriciel. Also still under development are *Rescue on Fractalus*, *Ballblazer* and *American Football*. Gosh.

SORRY, INCENTIVE

In our review of Mooncresta last issue, we said that the game had no pause mode. In fact it does – just press the "H" key.

BEYOND

Beyond Midnight

The successor to the epic adventure *Lords of Midnight* is on its way from Beyond. *Doomdark's Revenge*, scheduled for a June release, is similar to its predecessor but bigger and better.

ReJoyce for Alan

Amstrad's PR people tell us that the Marketing Society have announced the shortlist for their 1986 Awards for Marketing. And, you guessed, the list includes one A M Sugar and his PCW 8256. It'll only be his zillionth award of the year. Letters of a sycophantic nature direct to Amstrad please.

256

At press deadline times (end of April) Amstrad told us there were 'none in the country', but that a large consignment from their Far East factories was arriving imminently.

That's what they said about 3" disks back in February...



Commando price

Elite Systems have asked us to point out that they gave the wrong price for the cassette version of *Commando* in their ad printed in our last issue. The correct price is £9.95 not £8.95

Arnor Roms it with Micropower

ROM specialists Arnor have stopped producing their AD2 ROM cartridges. They are now recommending the new Micropower board, and are only fulfilling outstanding orders for the AD2 and its companion AX1 expansion card.

Cripes chaps, it's Biggles

Mirrorsoft's *Biggles* takes to the air in June, and Capt. W.E. Johns's hero may never be the same again. The game is based not on the original books but on the forthcoming Biggles feature film, a very different proposition.

As Biggles, you have to photograph and destroy a German secret weapon. This involves flying a biplane, trench fighting and a rooftop chase. The final sequence, on the other side of the cassette, entails destroying the secret weapon and rescuing your companions from behind enemy lines using – wait for it – a helicopter.

If this all starts to sound more like Rambo than Biggles, there's a reasonable explanation for it all – loopholes in time, to be precise. Well, it sounded reasonable to me. Anyway, if you're just dying to get airborne in your trusty Sopwith Jetranger, the game will set you back £9.95 on cassette or £14.95 on disc.



COMPETITION WINNERS

Here are the lists of winners for the competitions which appeared in the April issue. All three were very popular with a lot of correct answers, although not everyone could win. Those lucky readers who did should all be receiving their prize pretty soon, direct from the software houses concerned.

TAU CETI

The Correct Answers:-
1. Who was the first man in space? Yuri Gagarin.
2. What is the speed of light? 186,000 miles per second.
3. Who wrote and sang space oddity? David Bowie.

Winners:
Chaz Wood, Stockport; **Darren Ryder**, Leighton Buzzard, Beds; **V Mohan**, Glossop, Derbs; **John Lloyd**, Southwater, W. Sussex; **Kelly Brown**, Dover; **J North**, Huthwaite, Notts; **Mr C Tubbs**, Droitwich, Worcs; **Chad Griffin**, Birmingham; **B Johns**, Cumbria; **Steven Batsford**, Swindon; **Chris Secker**, N. Yorks; **Paul Febry**, Bristol; **Robert Shepherd**, Sutton-on-Sea, Lincs; **Simon Bloomer**, Manchester; **T Denyer**, Kyle of Lochalsh, Ross-Shire; **J P Starmer**, Nottingham; **Mido Elalfy**, Salford, Lancs; **James Hodson**, Plymouth; **T Singh**, Wolverhampton; **John Oliver**, Edenbridge, Kent; **Nigel Impey**, Higher Ferrers, Northants; **L D Heys**, Holland; **Trevor Howell**, Runcorn, Cheshire; **Master D Hill**, Leicester; **Mrs A Sims**, London E10. **Susan Williams**, Farnborough; **R Woods**, Mablethorpe, Lincs; **Richard Whiston**, Hornchurch; **Ian Steel**, Cumbria; **Christopher Jones**, Basingstoke; **Mr J Chapman**, Grantham, Linds; **Johnathan Hurst**, Windlesham, Surrey; **Chad Griffin**, Birmingham; **Mike Dash**, Hertford; **Christopher Morris**, Swansea; **James Sanderson**, Woking; **Raval Chrzaszis**, Hastings; **Ewen Roy**, Argyll; **Richard Clarke**, Stafford; **James Hodson**, Plymouth; **Kelvin Bilbie**, Uxbridge; **Ross Grater**, Fife; **Mr J Bass**, Peterborough; **Stuart Osborne**, Dover; **Mark Hollanders**, Manchester; **John Lock**, York; **M Girouard**, Tadworth, Surrey; **D C Walsh**, Cheshire; **G L Evans**, Whitby, N Yorks; **Andrew O'Donnell**, Reading; **Rhys Jones**, Peterborough; **Jesse Arthur**, Heathfield, E Sussex; **Keith Pratt**, Kent; **Martin Hatton**, Morpeth, Northumberland; **Paul Holdaway**, Stockport; **James Mason**, Leicester; **Mr Peter Holbrook**, Witham, Essex; **Matthew Mckenna**, Trowbridge; **D G Monk**, Leighton Buzzard; **Gavin Griffiths**, S Glamorgan; **Adam Berry**, Norwich; **M Benjafield**, Wareham; **Colin Morrison**, Perth, Scotland; **Mr P Williams**, Plymouth; **Peter Small**, Exeter; **Charles Joynson**, Bradford; **Beryl Rippon**, Warrington; **Richard Thompson**, Aberystwyth, Dyfed; **J F Palmer**, Bournemouth; **Jimmy Carter**, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; **Jenny Allen**, Lifton, Devon.

KNIGHT GAMES

The Correct Answers:-
1. Who was 'unready'? Ethelred.
2. What was the special name given to a jousting arena? A List
3. Where was the Magna Carta signed? Runnymede
4. How long did the 100 Years War last? We accepted 115 or 116 years.
5. At which battle did King Harold get an eyeful? The Battle of Hastings

The winners:
John Oliver, Edenbridge, Kent; **Kelly Brown**, Dover,; **Brian Kelly**, Dublin; **Hani King**, Exeter;

STRIKE FORCE HARRIER

The Correct Answers:-
1. What do the letters VTOL stand for? Vertical take off and landing
2. Who was the most successful German fighter pilot of WW1? Baron von Richthofen (the red baron)
3. How fast in m.p.h. is Mach 1? See ReAction pages.

Winners:
M Shermer, Bromley, Kent; **Paul Walton**, Tyne & Wear; **Mr Robin Dargie**, S Glamorgan; **Nick Chaplin**, Maidenhead, Berks; **Stephen Johnson**, Newquay, Cornwall; **Simon Hughes**, Deeside, Clwyd; **C Johnson**, Banbury, Oxon; **C I Smith**, Goodwick, Dyfed; **Iain McIntyre**, Glasgow; **Luke Harman**, Alcester, Warks; **Mr G Bairski**, Bristol; **Duncan Rippon**, Warrington; **Mr L Walker**, Liverpool; **Jimmy Carter**, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; **T Denyer**, Ross-Shire; **James Sanderson**, Woking; **Wesley Chapman**, Welwyn Garden City, Herefordshire; **Matthew Maxwell**, Bromley, Kent; **Chris Secker**, Nunthorpe, N Yorks; **Master A Hill**, Barwell, Leicester; **James Hobson**, Plymouth; **Eddie Nicholl**, Angus, Scotland; **Robert Shepherd**, Sutton-on-Sea; **Aidan O'Hanlan**, Dundalk, Eire; **Mark Richards**, Ulverston; **Ben Lower**, Wadhurst, Sussex; **A Hill**, Cheshire; **S J Thorn**, Bristol; **Rick J Artes**, Horsham, Sussex; **Sgt Williams**, BFPO 24; **Simon Dunne**, Newbury, Berks; **John Kelly**, Co Roscommon, Ireland; **Che Wall**, Maidstone, Kent; **J H Cameron**, Hexham; **Mr P C Newman**, Co Tyrone, N Ireland; **Nicholas Jackson**, Stafford; **T Daniells**, Chorley, Lancs; **Ben Tunstall**, Wimbledon; **Gerard Stockall**, Cheshire; **J Myles**, Durham; **K J Sandell**, Torpoint, Cornwall; **R McClenaghan**, Liverpool; **Matthew Hart**, Sutton Coldfield; **Sgt Bertram**, BFPO; **I Steel**, Ulverston, Cumbria; **Mr Tallis**, Timperley, Cheshire; **Jason Smith**, Caldicot, Gwent; **Stuart Osborne**, Dover; **David Cooper**, Wolverhampton; **Liam Daley**, Preston.

If you've got an Amstrad with a disk drive, CPC or PCW, you've got CP/M. And that means you've got the potential to do a lot of very powerful things with your machine. But how? ANDREW WILTON looks at two releases which could breathe new life into your Amstrad.

GETTING MORE FROM CP/M

Book review for PCW 8256/8512 and CPC 6128

THE AMSTRAD CP/M PLUS

Andrew R.M.Clarke & David Powys-Lybbe
MML Systems, £19.95 inc P&P from NewStar, 0277-220573

Production delays and similar problems are nothing new in the micro industry, but it's not just programs that fall victim to them. This book was originally comissioned for Amsoft, and was intended for publication as SOFT 971 – indeed, the 6128 manual makes reference to it as such. When Amstrad disposed of Amsoft, the book's authors were left looking for a publisher. Unable to get the book into print by any other means, they eventually published it themselves – and so here it is.

There is such a dearth of books on CP/M Plus, let alone on the Amstrad implementation of it, that any new title is welcome. Just *how* welcome this particular book is depends very much on what you're looking for.

The authors set out to tell you just about everything you could possibly want to know about CP/M Plus. This includes a potted history, a beginners' guide, two major programming sections and a series of weighty appendices also aimed at a programming readership. While the tale of CP/M's creation and development certainly makes interesting reading, the beginners' guide is the first section of any practical value.

FOR BEGINNERS

If you're new to CP/M Plus there are two quite distinct sorts of guidance that you need. On the one hand you want some information immediately – how to format discs, how to run programs, how to copy and rename files – without confusing technicalities getting in the way. On the other hand, you'll need at some stage to find out what's actually going on and learn some important general principles.

The authors recognise these two different needs, and cover them both quite explicitly. The beginners' guide starts off with general principles, but refers the less patient reader to the second "How to..." section. Skipping this first section means missing out on some useful, very low-level explanations. If you don't know what wildcards are, or what a default is, this will be required reading for you. The "How to..." section, on the other hand, simply tells you how to do those things you'll want to do at first.

Different writing styles suit different people. I found parts of the beginners' guide a bit convoluted, but this is very much a matter of personal taste. The content, on the other hand, has some real problems. The authors make quite unwarranted assumptions not about prior knowledge of computers – they're very hard to fault on this front – but rather about the hardware you have.

The book is supposed to be for 6128 and 8256 owners but, inexplicably, assumes in numerous places that you have a 6128 with two drives. To format a disk, for instance, "With the System Disk in drive A, insert the disk to be formatted in drive B." There is no explanation of what you are to do if you only have one drive. In places, references to drive B would produce the right result with a single drive – provided, that is, that you understand the way drives A and B both map on to the built-in drive. There's no explanation of this either, unfortunately. Besides, the whole point of the "How to..." section is that you shouldn't need any technical understanding.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ **Useful information on CP/M Plus.**
- ▶ **Vital technical material on the 6128 and 8256.**
- ▶ **Friendly section for beginners.**

B A D N E W S

- ▶ **The technical stuff can be very heavy going.**
- ▶ **Makes odd assumptions in the beginners' guide.**
- ▶ **Not really a beginners' book anyway.**

PROGRAMMING

If there's one place you're certainly going to need a good technical grounding, it's the programming section. The sections on BIOS and BDOS are just crammed with information, and it's

CP/M PLUS

If you've got a 6128 or an 8256, you'll have got CP/M Plus "bundled" with it – included in the price you paid, that is. Its proper name is CP/M v3.0, but it's so different from the old CP/M v2.2 that the "Plus" tag has stuck. So what are these differences?

CP/M Plus has a lot of advantages over v2.2, not least in letting you change disc when you want – particularly useful if you've got a single-drive 6128. It also offers almost twice as much memory space for applications – the magical "TPA" – allowing larger and more powerful packages to be written.

These changes are very welcome, but they do mean you need specific Plus documentation. This is especially true when it comes to the utilities on the CP/M system discs, many of which behave differently to their v2.2 counterparts or are only to be found on CP/M Plus – hence the value of a book like this.

The Free Software Handbook is available from:
David Rubins Associates Ltd
1 Canonbourne, Western Sub Edge, Glos, GL55 6QH
Tel 0386-841181. (Access and Visa orders taken)

all good stuff. The problem is, you could have a job digesting it all. For one thing, even if you read and understood the Amsoft firmware guides you could still find a considerable jump in the level of complexity. For another, it's complex stuff anyway, and the authors don't really have the room to take their time over things.

Not all the programming chapters are this formidable, it has to be said. If you don't feel ready for CP/M at assembler level there's a useful chapter on high-level languages and their CP/M implementations, and a less useful appendix on BASIC-E. The technical side is where the book's real strength lies, however, so if you don't want that you probably don't want the book.

Software-plus-book for all Amstrad disk owners, PCW and CPC

THE FREE SOFTWARE HANDBOOK

Platt, Hatcher and Van Meter
PeopleTalk Associates, £39.95 with 3" disks or £18.95 book only.

If you've got CP/M, you've got access not only to some first rate applications software but also to a vast array of public domain programs. The great thing about public domain is, if you like a program and find it useful you can make copies and give them to friends, *legally*. Because of this, a public domain – or "p-d" – program can travel large distances. The problem then is documentation – how do you know how it's supposed to work?

Word of mouth is never very satisfactory, and sooner or later you're going to come across something you forgot to ask about. Of course, the original authors of p-d programs have no incentive to document them. Often the authors are unknown, or the programs considerably modified by later users. The Texas firm of PeopleTalk set out to fill the documentation gap, and this book is the result.

Of course, there are far too many p-d programs for one book to cover more than a fraction of them. The authors have, therefore, picked their 70 favourite programs to document. For each one you get a description of the program, together with details of operation. The writing style is chatty, informal and very friendly. The assumption throughout is that hackers write p-d programs but ordinary people use them. Where the book *has* to get technical – for a modem program and a selection of hackers' tools – the explanations are kept clear and reasonably simple.

AMSTRAD COMPATIBILITY

Unfortunately, Amstrad owners with an interest in p-d have more than documentation to worry about. The little matter of the 3" disk format has prevented the normal flow of p-d from other machines at an individual level. User groups have been the main force behind p-d on the Amstrad machines, so if you're not a member of one you probably won't have many of the programs the book covers.

Davis Rubin Associates, who distribute the book in this country, also offer the programs on 3" disks. For most users, the book will only be of any use with the disks so in a sense this is more a software review. Bear in mind, however, that these programs are public domain. If you can cadge copies off a friend, do so – that's what the programs' authors intended. In any case, you'll probably find the book helpful.

The programs fall into various serious categories – applications, file management, communications etc. – but the first thing to mention is the games section.

The games present quite a few difficulties, and not just because this is the Serious Software section. Most of them, and that means 15 programs out of the total 70 considered, are in BASIC. The problem is, this means MBASIC or something compatible – Locomotive BASIC just won't do. Mallard BASIC, as supplied with the 8256 and 8512, works just fine so PCW owners can have a whale of a time. If you own a CPC on the other hand, you probably don't have a suitable BASIC. That still leaves chess, othello and an enormous adventure all in .COM form.

APPLICATIONS

Serious programs form the majority, and some of them are very useful indeed. If you run a shop, the inventory program FOOD could be just what you're looking for to keep track of your stock levels. As for any writers out there, they might like to try out SPELL-11. It's a spelling checker complete with start-up dictionary, and compares very favourably with commercial alternatives. Use this in conjunction with the p-d word count WCOUNT and you could save yourself a lot of effort, not to mention a fair bit of money.

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

When a programmer writes a piece of software, he has an automatic copyright over it. Nobody else can make a copy of the program without getting his permission – which usually means parting with cash.

Copyright doesn't normally lapse until 50 years after the author's death. Computers being fairly rare in 1936, you might suppose that all worthwhile computer programs were still under copyright. In fact, this is not the case. Many benevolent programmers give up their rights to programs they've written, so that anyone can use and copy them quite freely.

Surrendering your copyright over a program in this way is called "putting it in the *public domain*". There are now large numbers of public domain programs in circulation, many of them really quite old in micro-computing terms. Nobody can sell the actual programs, though commercial distributors will charge for copying, documentation and the disks themselves.

On the disk management side there are utilities to squeeze and unsqueeze files, erase and unerase, rename, transfer and index them. There's also a whole package of library utilities and a marvellous master catalogue program, either of which would help organise the most chaotic collection of disks. For hackers there are debugging and disk editing tools, a comms program and an input/output trap.

Although these programs are not particularly new, and are therefore designed to run on earlier versions of CP/M, most of them will still run under CP/M Plus. The handful that don't are unfortunately of no use to PCW users, while 6128 owners will need to dig out their CP/M 2.2 discs. And the classic Star Trek game STRTRK needs an archaic dialect of BASIC which Mallard can't stand in for. Otherwise, there are a lot of rough edges which quality commercial software would have had removed – but at the price, that's hardly something to complain about.

Whether this package is your kind of thing depends on what you're after. It does make CP/M interesting and fun, and that takes some doing. For PCW owners it offers entertainment and a good set of utilities at a very reasonable price. As for CPC users, there are much slicker entertainments packages available to them elsewhere – but it still offers great value for CP/M users, on the serious side of things. In addition it offers a rare taste of the pioneering spirit that computing used to be all about – or a touch of nostalgia, if you were there.

GOOD NEWS

- **Friendly, helpful book.**
- **70 great programs, some almost of professional quality.**
- **The sort of utilities that are actually useful.**
- **As much fun as CP/M can be.**
- **A little piece of history.**

BAD NEWS

- **The software may be free, but the book and disks aren't.**
- **CPC owners can't run most of the games.**
- **PCW owners won't be able to run some of the applications due to incompatibility with CP/M Plus.**

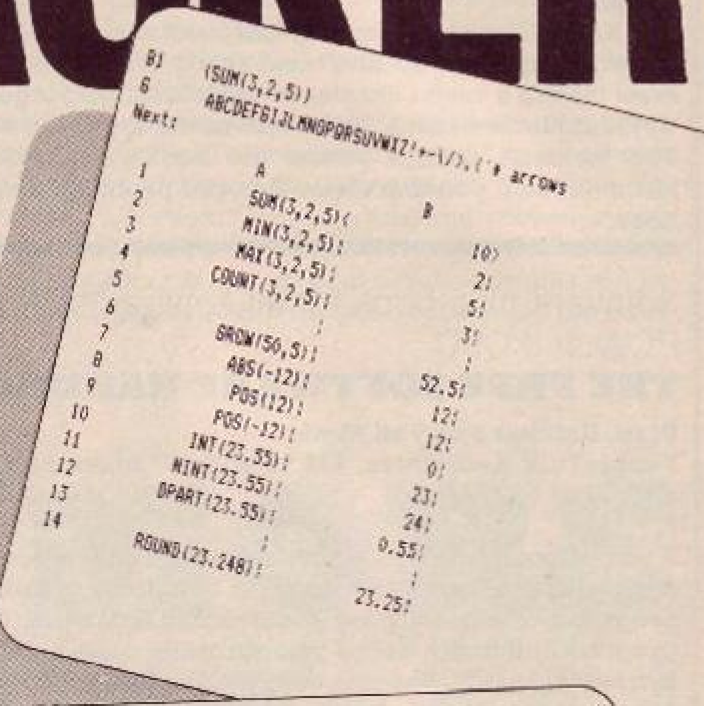
THE CRACKER

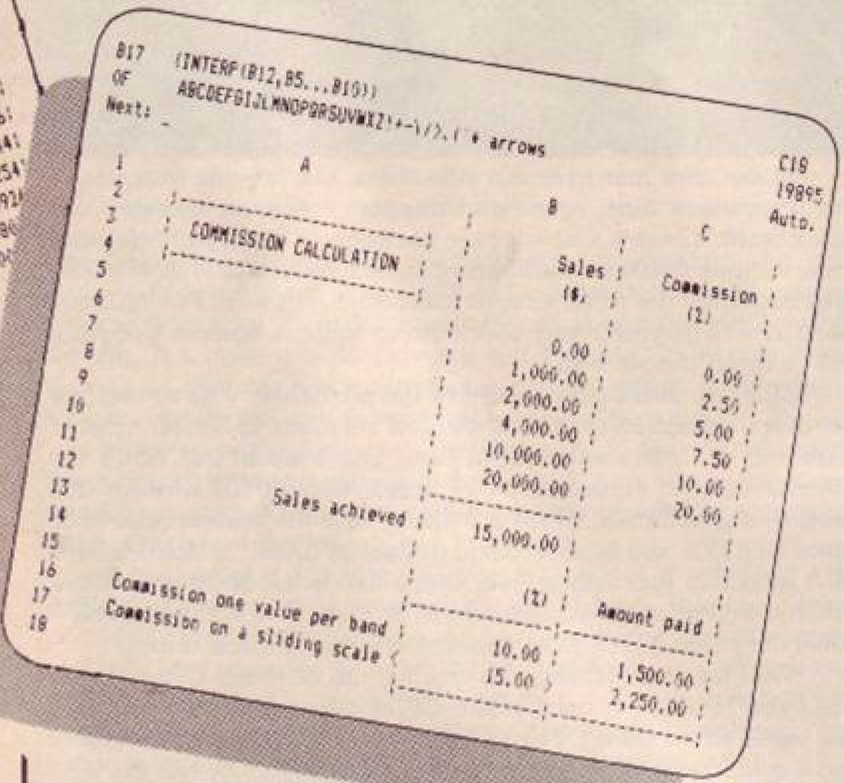
THE CRACKER

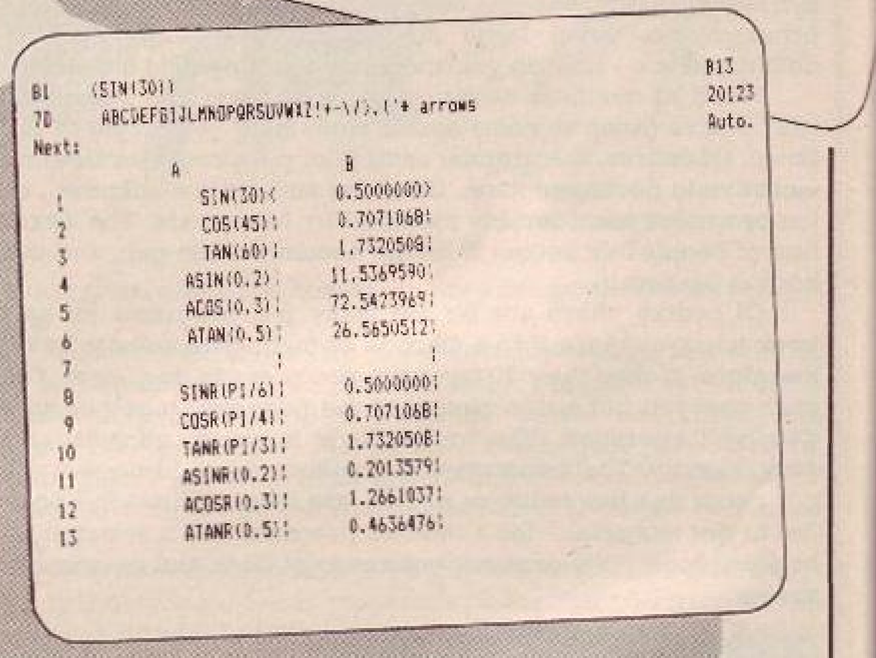
PCW 8256/8512 or CPC 6128
Software Technology / NewStar, £49.00 disk

If I told you *The Cracker* was a spreadsheet, you'd probably start thinking of it as a financial tool. Well, it is a spreadsheet – but normal budget calculations don't even scratch the suface of it's capabilities. It is intended to bring spreadsheet power to maths, scientific and statistics applications.

Right from the word go, it's obvious that *The Cracker* is unusually complex for a spreadsheet. You can't just start filling in the sheet, because there isn't one at first. You have to create the sheet from scratch, adding columns and lines as you see fit. For each column you'll have to specify the width you want it to be, and the default data type you want each cell to contain. This gives you a great deal of control over the layout of the sheet, but is far too long-winded for simple budgeting or the like.







COMMANDS

Single letter commands are used to control and manipulate the sheet, but as you enter them *Cracker* displays the meaning of the commands in plain English. Thus, if you type "NF6E" the command line displays "New Format to be 6 sig figs Exponent". This translation comes up as you type the line, the idea being to let you spot mistakes even before you've hit return.

This prompting philosophy is carried right the way through *The Cracker*. At every stage of the command process, all possible keypresses – including the return key, where appropriate – are displayed above the command line. When you're entering formulae, errors are reported immediately they are noticed – which usually means before you've hit return.

Error messages are usually specific and helpful. If you try entering the nonsense formula "2/+2" *Cracker* will beep when you type the plus sign, and display the message "Separate these operators". There is even an error message – "outside worksheet" – to cover attempts to move the cursor off one edge of the sheet. This could be taking things a little far I feel, but it's certainly a fair indication of the program's thoroughness.

EXPRESSIONS

This certainly shows a novel approach, but it's in its expressions vocabulary that *The Cracker* really shows originality. Most spreadsheets can manage numerical operators, trig functions and perhaps a little statistics. *ScratchPad Plus* went a good deal further than this, even coming close to programming with its IF...THEN construction – but *The Cracker* can beat this without even trying.

Cracker formulae can include pi, e, logs, perms & combs, random numbers, Booleans, interpolations and just about anything else you could ask for in the mathematical line. They can alter the contents of other cells quite freely, and the DO...WHILE construct gives them true program status. Logs can be natural or base 10, while angles can be in degrees or radians.

Though there are a few functions of a financial nature, it should be clear from the above that the intended market is scientific, engineering and mathematical. The fact is, spreadsheets have always had the potential to serve as valuable tools in these fields, held back only by the lack of the necessary expressions.

Another strong feature which it shares with *SuperCalc 2* is the ability to sort rows and columns either numerically or alphabetically. This means the program can be adapted for use as a small database, and can be extremely powerful in applic-

ations where both calculation and sorting is required.

APPLICATIONS

Quite what you do with a flexible tool like *The Cracker* is very much up to your imagination. The manual suggests using it to solve simultaneous equations, and similar problems, iteratively. This can be done either by forced recalculation or by the use of DO...WHILE loops – it's up to you. There isn't quite the numerical range that you'd get from a scientific calculator – you're limited to plus or minus 1E38 – but accuracy to twelve decimal places will probably make up for this.

The sheet format is so variable that normal measures of maximum size don't mean a great deal. The best yardstick is probably free memory, and that runs to just under 17K on both the PCW machines and the 6128. That may sound a bit thin, but it's probably more than adequate for its intended applications, especially as the memory is used efficiently. While a financial spreadsheet needs to mundane things to vast quantities of data, *The Cracker* can do very impressive things with smaller quantities – and that's exactly what you need for mathematical purposes.

Working entirely in memory, the program is fast even in auto-calculation mode. Of course, any really time-consuming number crunching can be left running in a DO...WHILE loop while you go off and make a cup of tea.

DOCUMENTATION

The manual is well presented and clearly written. It falls into two parts, a tutorial and a reference section. The tutorial is friendly and straightforward, with a wealth of examples and screen diagrams to help clarify things. The reference section is thorough and well set-out. This is just as well, for I suspect that the typical *Cracker* user will feel more at home with a reference section than a tutorial.

G O O D N E W S

- **Crammed with powerful expressions.**
- **Many of the features of a programming language.**
- **Lots of on-screen help.**
- **Good documentation.**

B A D N E W S

- **Very complex compared to a normal spreadsheet.**
- **Non-programmers may have difficulty getting the most out of it.**
- **Can only handle 17K of data.**

MICROFILE

MICROFILE

Cornix Software £19.95 cass, £24.95 disk
CPC 464, 664, 6128

It is easy these days to get applications which are more powerful, complex and costly than you actually need. If you're looking for a simple cardbox to run your mailing list or organise your stamp collection, *Microfile* represents a simple no-frills alternative to a full-feature database.

The program is written in BASIC, but there's no need to let that put you off. More significantly, the BASIC is unprotected – even on the cassette version, the manual strongly encourages you to make back-up copies. Many cassette users would consider this an unnecessary precaution, but it's nice to have the choice.

In use, the program is extremely straightforward. Records can have up to 15 fields, which should be enough for most small applications. The set-up procedure is very simple, as the card has a fixed format.

Records can be added, browsed through or deleted in the normal way. Initial entry and subsequent alterations are made very easy by the friendly record editor, which gives access to the record as a whole rather than the fields individually.

The search is easy to set up either on one field or several. It always distinguishes between upper and lower case, but this can be turned to your advantage with a little effort. Similarly, the sort routine puts capitals before lower case letters and has no numerical option. It does, fortunately, have a surname handling facility so John Smith's entry can be printed out as "John Smith" but still go in with the other Smiths for sorting purposes.

Sorting is the only area where the speed of the BASIC is a real drawback – it's also the only area where the program is really oversimplified. On the speed front, however, 464 owners have a more general problem. Every so often, the program has to stop for a "garbage collection". This is a result of the 464's older BASIC and does not occur on the 664 or 6128.

The disk version of the program uses the disk to store sections of the file not immediately in use, so that file size is limited by disk space rather than available memory. This has drawbacks in terms of speed, but nothing too drastic. The odd thing about the disk system is that it only allows one file per disk. I don't really see the need for this. Given the nature of the program it's pretty unlikely that you'll be creating disk sized files with it, so you could end up wasting quite a bit of disk space – and that's expensive these days.

The manual is very friendly, and explains the concepts behind databases very simply and clearly. It's also got a lot of good ideas on turning the program's limitations to your advantage. The only shortcoming is in the order it explains things – it doesn't immediately tell you how to get started. That said, it's not really intended for people who want to get stuck in straight away. Rest assured, it *does* tell you everything you need to know in due course.

G O O D N E W S

- **Extremely easy to use.**
- **Documentation is friendly and well thought out**
- **Files can be as big as your disk.**

B A D N E W S

- **A bit pricey for what it is – Mini Office or Office Mate give better value.**
- **Takes its time over some tasks.**
- **Needs a separate working disk for each application.**
- **Too limited for some jobs.**

Speling Chekkers

PROSPELL
Arnor, £24.95 disk, £34.95 ROM
CPC 464, 664, 6128

Ace speller Pete Connor finds out just why he needs Arnor's *Prospell*

Arnor's *Protext* is one of the more popular Amstrad word processors; this companion spelling checker deserves to enjoy similar success. In fact, *more* success, since you can you use it with just about every other word processor around – this article has been written with *Wordstar* and checked quite easily using *Prospell*.

Prospell's two most apparent virtues are the size of its dictionary and the speed with which it searches: it contains 32,000 words (before you've added any) and runs through text at a rate of about 2,000 words per minute. Not bad for a dumb machine, especially when you consider that yer average university graduate would only have a vocab of around 20,000 words and certainly couldn't spot spelling errors at *Prospell's* rate.

Another advantage of *Prospell* is that it is available on ROM, thereby giving virtually instant access to its services. However, for the purposes of this review we used the disk version, so all that follows has been gleaned using that version only.

Spelling checkers

The thing to bear in mind when using spelling checkers is that they can't do *everything* for you. They can only query words that don't feature in their dictionary, so the bigger the dictionary the more efficient the checker.

A spelling checker *isn't* intelligent – not even artificially. It won't understand your text, and won't be able to consider words in context. For example, if you mistype *and* as *ad*, *Prospell* will not query the result since it contains *ad* in its dictionary – presumably for advertisement.

What checkers have over humans is thoroughness and better concentration. As any journalist could tell you – and you only have to read Amstrad Action to test this – it's very difficult indeed to spot every mistake in a piece of writing, especially those niggling typos such as *adn, hte, wrod* etc. You can be pretty sure a spelling checker won't just skip paragraphs that are too boring to read.

A further virtue is the opportunity to create specialist dictionaries. You might, for instance, write the occasional article on Greek architecture. In this case you could have a whole dictionary which would check only for words such as *Doric, peristyle, caryatid* etc.

Prospell is loaded very simply, whatever the word processor you are using. With *Protext*, you first load the wp and then the spelling checker. With other programs you first load the *Prospell* program disk followed by the dictionary (on the other side). Then you load up your text file.

Entering |SM will produce the menu, from which you will first want to choose D if you are not using *Protext*. You can then run a straightforward check a file by pressing S and typing in the file name.

And off it goes, at its 2000 wpm. When it finds what it suspects of being a deviant – a word that is not in its dictionary – the word will appear accompanied by a question mark. You now have five options.

S will allow you to store the word in *Prospell's* dictionary, always presuming that it's one you think is worth storing. If you don't want to take any action on the word, **I** instructs the program to ignore it.

If there's a mistake **C** allows you to change the spelling. Part of the text is displayed with the offending word highlighted. It can then be edited or rewritten.

V allows a word to be viewed in context, though it doesn't allow you to alter it. It's a particularly useful option for abbreviations and the like, whose meaning is only clear in the their context.

L is the 'Look up spelling' option. If a word whose spelling you are unsure of comes up, this command will make *Prospell* search through its dictionary and come up with lookalikes that might fit the bill. So, when I ran through the first few paragraphs of this review *Prospell* came up with *yer*. I entered L and the program came up with such suggestions as *yet, yen, yea* etc. Could be very useful.

The main menu offers several other choices. **T** is an alternative to **S**, and will give you a 'Two pass' check: instead of stopping at each unrecognised word, the whole file is checked giving you a list of words at the end that can then be dealt with one by one. You thus avoid having to watch the screen all the time.

The two screen pass also gives you the option, after the first pass, of checking with another dictionary. You might, for example have built up several small dictionaries of technical vocabulary which you would not want in the main dictionary.

Creating dictionaries is a simple matter. You can, of course, just add words to *Prospell's* existing list. This contains just over 32,000 words and occupies 77% of disk space, so there's plenty of room for expansion. A completely new dictionary can be created with the **I** command, which will turn a blank disk into a formatted dictionary disk with its own name. Should you find any mistakes in your dictionaries – you might, for instance, misspell a word when adding it to a list – you can correct them easily by using the command **E** for Edit.

GOOD NEWS

- **Very fast – and no fuss.**
- **Large dictionary – 32,000 words.**
- **Can be used with most word processors.**
- **Clear documentation.**
- **Easy to add to existing, or create new, dictionaries.**
- **Available on disk or ROM.**

BAD NEWS

- **Not cheap.**
- **Works best with two-drive system.**

The Verdict

Prospell doesn't come cheap at £24.95 on disc and £34.95 on ROM, but it really is an excellent program. It does just about everything you could want of such software, and a little bit more. Extras, for instance, include a facility to search for anagrams and to find word patterns with the use of 'wild card' characters – both of them a boon for at least the crossword puzzler.

It's fast – very fast – flexible and very easy to use. Unlike many other CP/M checkers, it's pure English – so you want be hauled up before the judge for writing *colour*. Creating new dictionaries, or adding to existing ones, is a cinch. Since it works with ASCII files you can use it with just about any of the popular word processors.

As with most checkers, *Prospell* works best using two drives – you have the dictionary in b and the text in a. It will, of course work perfectly well on a single drive system, but you'll have to do a fair amount of disk swapping.

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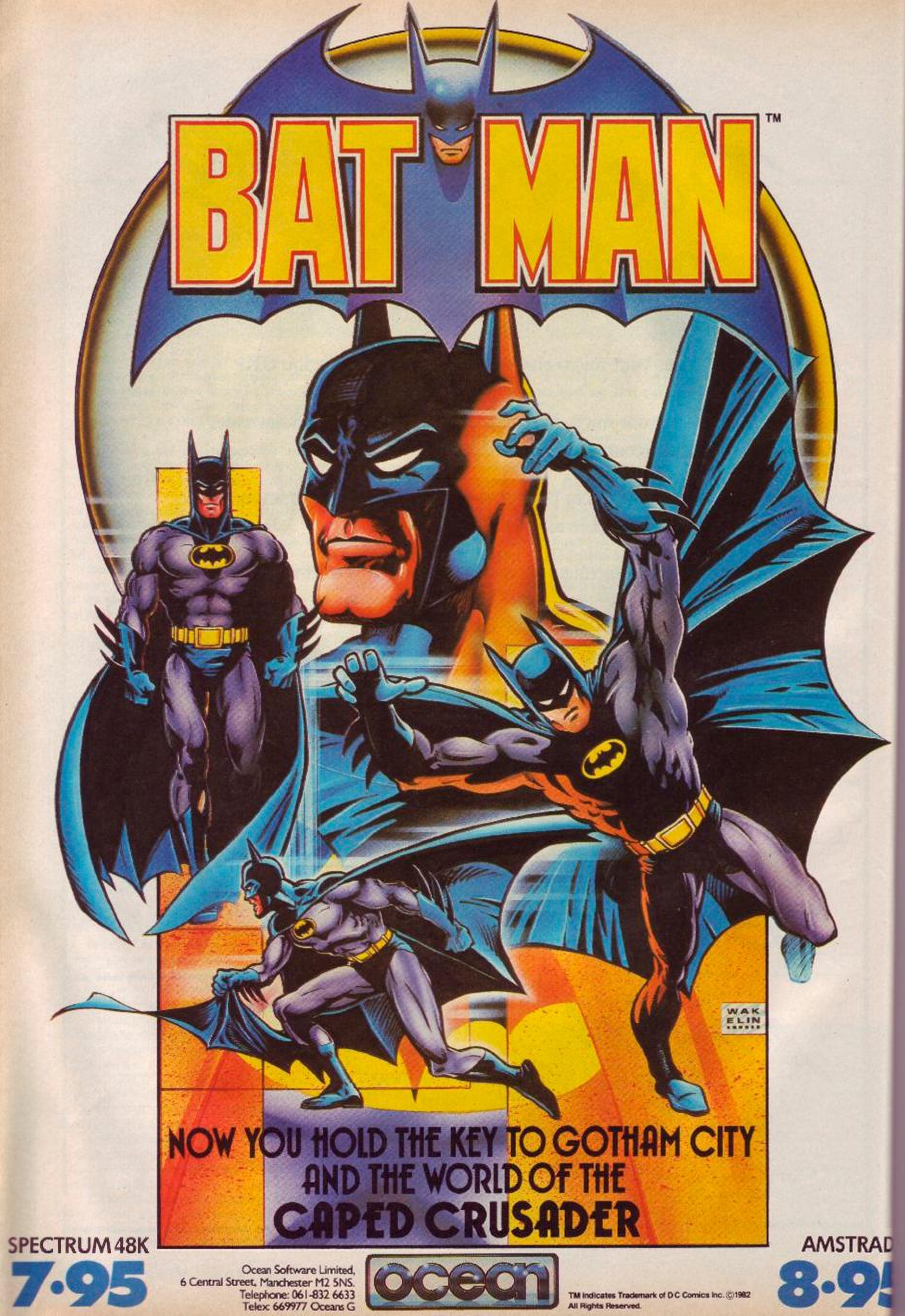
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AMSTRAD
8·9

OFFICE MATE
Gemini, £15 cass, £17.50 disc

OFFICE MASTER
Gemini, £25 cass/disc
CPC 464, 664, 6128

Mate & Master

Andrew Wilton looks at twin programs from Gemini. Do they pose a threat to *Mini Office 2*?

These two Gemini packages might owe a fair bit to Database's *Mini Office* in terms of name and price tag, but they have more of an accounting slant to them. *Office Mate* consists of a database and report generator, a home accounts package and a graph/chart plotter. Big brother *Office Master* has all these, plus the business orientated Cashbook, Final Accounts and VAT File.

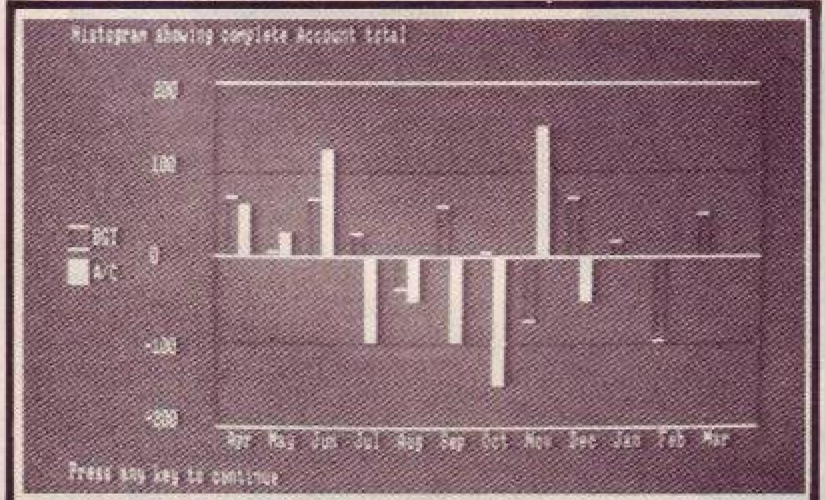
■ OFFICE MATE

The *Mate* database is a conventional cardbox, and working only in memory you'll be restricted to around 13K of data. This isn't too serious, so long as you stick to the sort of applications Gemini suggest – catalogues of collections, or small mailing lists. Disc users, however, will miss the extra capacity the *Mini Office II* database would offer them.

If *Mate* can't handle enormous quantities of data, it can certainly offer you flexibility. Rather than having the usual fixed-length fields in a standard format, your record cards can take any form you like. You can put text and fields anywhere you like – and the fields can be any length up to 160 characters.

Once you've built up your mailing list or whatever, there are plenty of commands to let you use the information. The FIND command is a little unfriendly if you've never done any BASIC programming, but it is very powerful. If you want to find all those stamps in your collection that are blue, worth less than £5 and originate in Peru *or* Bolivia, FIND can do it. Another powerful feature is the CALCULATE option, which can handle numbers or text. Again, you'll need to know some BASIC to get the most out of this.

To print out your data you can make do with the PRINT command, but you can achieve much more with the separate report generator program. This can handle anything from simple labelling up to a crude-but-effective mailmerge. If you

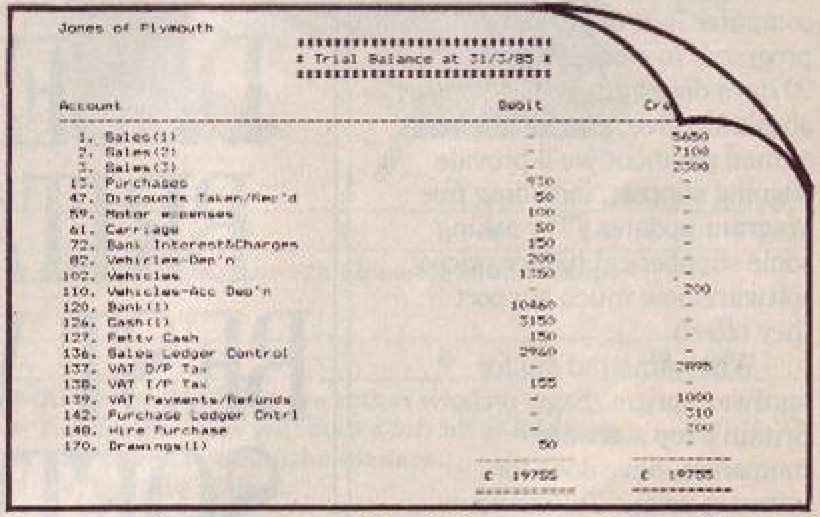


want to send out an individualised mailshot, this can do the job – and you don't even need a word-processor.

The other major feature of *Office Mate* is the home accounts package. This was reviewed in the February issue of AA as a stand-alone package, and is effectively unchanged. The inclusion of the graph/chart plotter as the fourth component of the package means that you can present your bank balance figures as bar, line or pie charts and then dump them to a Mannesman or Epson-compatible printer.

■ OFFICE MASTER

As well as the above four programs, *Master* includes a suite of business accounting programs which, as with the home accounts, were previously sold separately. There is a major change here, not in the programs themselves but in the value



Jones of Plymouth

* Trial Balance at 31/3/85 *

Account	Debit	Credit
1. Sales(1)	-	5650
2. Sales(2)	-	7100
3. Sales(3)	-	2500
13. Purchases	930	-
47. Discounts Taken/Rec'd	50	-
59. Motor expenses	100	-
61. Carriage	50	-
72. Bank Interest&Charges	150	-
87. Vehicles-Dep'n	200	-
102. Vehicles	1350	-
110. Vehicles-Acc Dep'n	-	200
120. Bank(1)	10460	-
126. Cash(1)	3150	-
127. Petty Cash	150	-
136. Sales Ledger Control	2960	-
137. VAT O/P Tax	-	2895
138. VAT I/P Tax	155	-
139. VAT Payments/Refunds	-	1000
142. Purchase Ledger Cntrl	-	310
148. Hire Purchase	-	200
170. Drawings(1)	50	-
	£ 19755	£ 19755

for money they represent. The disk version of the suite would have set you back almost £100 at the start of the year, while now it's less than £10 on top of the basic *Office Mate* price.

At £100, the documentation was thin and the programs fairly unfriendly. Being written in BASIC and having poor error-trapping, the suite was hardly up to the professional standards the price tagsuggested. As part of a budget package, it can be forgiven these shortcomings quite easily. It does the job, and that's got to make it worth the money – provided it's a job you really want to computerise. Much the same goes for the packages as a whole. If you want the individual programs, the package is remarkable value – but, database aside, the programs aren't generally useful in the *Mini Office II* sense. The home accounts in particular are fairly inflexible, and I really miss the at-a-glance access to the figures you get from a spreadsheet. Also, the documentation is very short on friendliness. If you don't really know what a database can do for you, or what a record is, the manual doesn't explain.

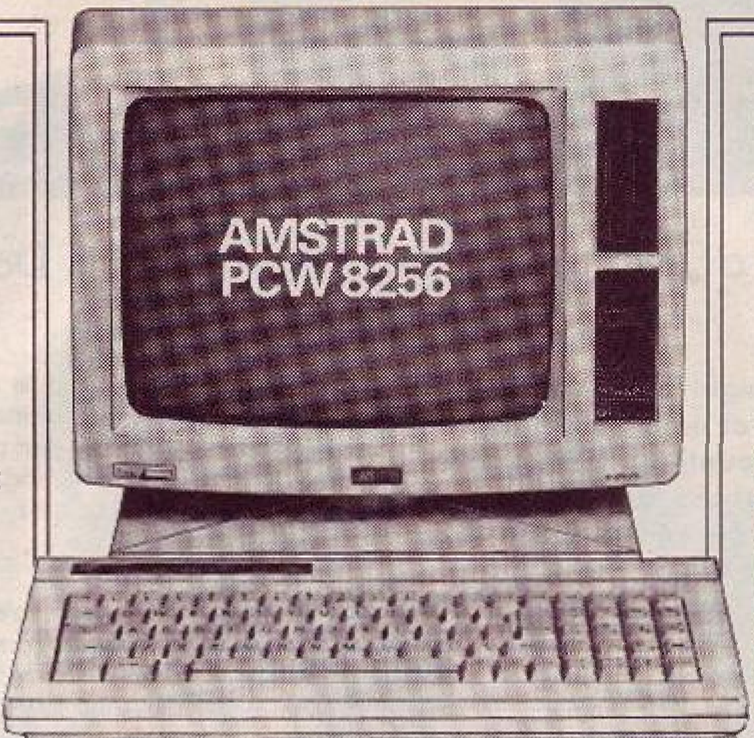
G O O D N E W S

- ▶ **Good value for money.**
- ▶ **Nice database, and some powerful accounts programs.**

B A D N E W S

- ▶ **Not very friendly.**
- ▶ **Documentation is unhelpful.**

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AA 6/86

DISC HACKING

Reviews of two big-claim utilities – controversial, yes, but are they any good?

LOCKSMITH

Beebugsoft, £13.95 cass, £16.95 disc, £29.95 Rom
CPC 464, 664, 6128

While their previously released *Disc Demon* only skirted the issue of back-up copies/piracy, Beebugsoft are putting themselves right in the firing line with this one. It's an unashamed copier-cum-deprotector, and as such it's going to get a few people rather hot under the collar.

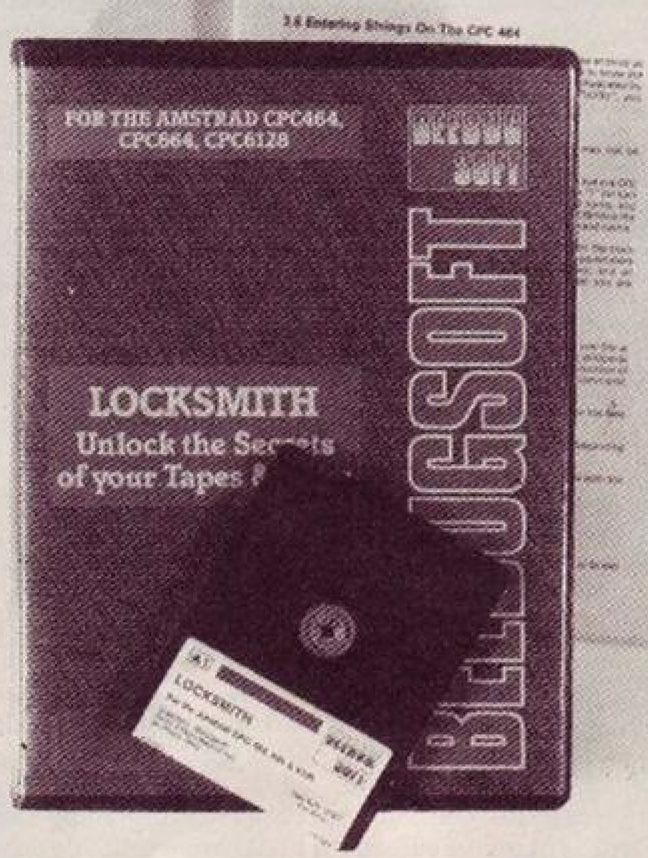
As in *Disc Demon* the routines making up the package are implemented as bar commands, but can be called up from a menu instead if you can't remember the exact name or you're just feeling lazy. The cassette and disc versions reside in memory, lopping a hefty 11K off the user RAM. This shouldn't cause too much of a problem though, as you're highly unlikely to want these utilities while you're programming.

The commands start off with four different file transfer routines covering all the combinations of copying to and from tape/disc. These are all fairly simple pieces of work – the tape routines can only read standard files with headers, while the disc routines need CAT-able files to work on.

You can avoid the disc limitation easily enough by using the BACKUP command. This copies the entire disc, and very rarely fails to work. Rather less reliable is the command HCOPY. This is supposed to transfer headerless tape files, but works only with certain provisos. Firstly, the file must have been written using the firmware headerless save routine. Secondly, you have to know the sync byte used. If neither of these conditions makes any sense to you, you'll have an interesting time trying to copy headerless files.

The first condition essentially means that *Locksmith* can't handle turbo or flash-loading files, and the second means it could take quite a bit of work to make it handle any headerless files at all.

The remaining commands include a BASIC deprotector, a header reader and a tape speed utility. A pretty uninspiring package then. If you're a bit of a hacker and can lay your hands on a disassembler, you could get the system going quite well – but then if you're a hacker, you could probably write at least as good yourself.



G O O D N E W S

- ▶ **Software houses needn't lose too much sleep.**

B A D N E W S

- ▶ **At best the utilities are rather weak.**
- ▶ **Headerless files will take a fair bit of fiddling.**
- ▶ **Can't even touch turbo-loaders.**
- ▶ **Not terribly ethical.**

MASTER DISC

Siren Software £12.99 disc only
CPC 464, 664, 6128

This Siren package really does offer you quite a lot for your money. There's a sector map and editor if you want to mess around at the byte level, a directory editor if you've got a spot of unerasing or file protection to do, and a pair of header readers for the hackers amongst you. If you're scared of CP/M you might enjoy the file transfer and disc copier routines, while speed freaks will appreciate the high speed formatter.

All of these (and a few more besides) are called up from a central menu, and on-screen help is available if you need it. This tends to be useful if a little terse, and contains stern warnings not to infringe copyright on all the appropriate routines.

If Siren are keen to discourage you from copying other people's software unfairly, they make absolutely certain you can't mess around with theirs. The various *Master Disc* routines can all recognise their disc, and refuse to work on it!

The routines are generally well thought out and work quite satisfactorily. My main grumble would be that abandoning a routine half way through can be extremely difficult. Also, one or two routines aren't quite as well error-trapped as they might be. Notable among these is the disc copier IMAGE which doesn't check to see that there's a disc in the drive before starting to function.



G O O D N E W S

- ▶ **A dozen utilities, many of them very useful.**
- ▶ **Quite a fair price.**
- ▶ **Good on-screen help.**

B A D N E W S

- ▶ **Several of the routines only duplicate CP/M utilities.**
- ▶ **Can be difficult to exit at times.**
- ▶ **Poor error-trapping in places.**

TURBO COMPILER

HiSoft, £15.95 cass
CPC 464, 664, 6128

The advantage of a BASIC Compiler, as explained in last month's review of Ocean's *Laser Compiler*, is that it will take a BASIC program and translate it, once and for all, into machine code. Although this machinecode won't run as fast as a custom-built assembler program, it will give a decent increase in speed over the interpreted version.

HiSoft have been providing software for Amstrad micros for as long as there have been Amstrad micros. Their new Turbo compiler (I wonder where they found such an original name?) covers a good sub-set of Locomotive BASIC commands and is very easy to use.

There are two ways of compiling a program using *Turbo*. Either way, the first thing you do is to load the compiler into memory. This is straightforward, and when you run the compiler, it asks where you want it located in memory. You'll only need to change from the default if the program you want to compile is particularly long. If it's under 8K, you can type it in or load it from disc as normal, with the compiler in memory. You can edit or run the program just as if the compiler wasn't there, but typing |COMPILE will call in the compiler and produce a machine-code version of the program. You can then run this by typing |RUN, and note the difference in speed.

If your program is longer than 8K, you can still compile it by loading the original from disc and saving the compiled version back to disc as another file. This method allows programs up to 12K to be compiled.

You can combine compiled programs with interpreted ones, calling the compiled sub-routines as you might any other section of machine-code. You can even pass values to and from compiled sub-routines. This is important, since *Turbo* has no facilities for file handling. This makes it difficult to use in programs such as databases or spreadsheets.

The documentation supplied was in draft form, but seemed fairly comprehensive. I would have liked a few more facts and figures, and a list of keywords not supported, (the extra commands available from BASIC 1.1 are unsupported, for instance).

In comparison with Ocean's *Laser Compiler*, *Turbo* has three main advantages and one disadvantage. It compiles considerably faster than *Laser*, taking only a few seconds even when compiling from and to disc files. The compiled program is a good deal shorter than the *Laser* version, meaning you can cope with longer 'originals'. Finally, it's ten quid cheaper than the Ocean offering, which may well make the difference. What it doesn't have is all the tie-ins with *Laser BASIC*'s sprite routines, so for compiling games you may be better off with *Laser*. It's really a question of tailoring what you buy to what you need.

The Verdict

The *Turbo* compiler has many appealing features, especially its speed of compilation, and the compactness of the programs it produces. *Turbo* is better suited to compiling programs written with compilation in mind, than to converting existing BASIC software. It can speed your BASIC programs up considerable, but as you would expect, is better at speeding up calculation and program logic than graphic-intensive programs such as games. Even with games, though, the difference can be quite marked. Well worth the asking price.

GOOD NEWS

- **Handles a large subset of Amstrad BASIC keywords.**
- **Compiles very fast, in a single pass.**
- **Produces stand-alone code, which may be marketed without royalties (though a copyright message would be appreciated!)**
- **Adds only 2-3K to a typical BASIC program.**

BAD NEWS

- **Can't compile programs longer than about 12K, even disc-to-disc.**
- **Doesn't handle floating-point numbers.**
- **Won't handle extra keywords of BASIC 1.1 (as used on CPC6128).**

PROMERGE

Arnor, £24.95 disc, £34.95 ROM
CPC 464, 664, 6128

If you use Arnor's speedy *Protext* word processor, you may be interested in this useful set of extensions. The package offers mail merge and, on the ROM version, some very nice improvements to *Protext* as a whole. It must be emphasised, however, that *Promerge* can only be used with *Protext*.

The mail merge facility is implemented as a set of additional stored commands. These define how information from the data file is to be merged into, and affect the printing of, the template document. The way in which they work is easy enough to grasp, provided you're a bit of a programmer. If you've never done any programming, however, you could have a problem with concepts like variables and conditions. They do give a great deal of power and flexibility, but only at the price of confusion for some.

As for performance, this is quite impressive. Documents can be inserted, passages or whole documents printed conditionally and data items manipulated. Into the last category come such things as extracting a surname or title from someone's full name, or the county from an address. Used with conditional printing this could mean, for example, sending a modified letter to all those on the mailing list who are women and live in London.

The ROM version, *Promerge+*, also has some very useful features such as background printing – that is, printing a file while doing other tasks with the computer – and full-scale cut and paste. These really do beef *Protext* up considerably, and makes the system as a whole that much more attractive. It's a real shame, then, that Arnor couldn't either include these on the disc *Promerge* or build them into a new improved *Protext*. As it is, these slick features will cost you £75 from scratch, and that's assuming you've already got a ROM board.

GOOD NEWS

- **Powerful mail merge facilities.**
- **Impressive extras on the ROM version.**

BAD NEWS

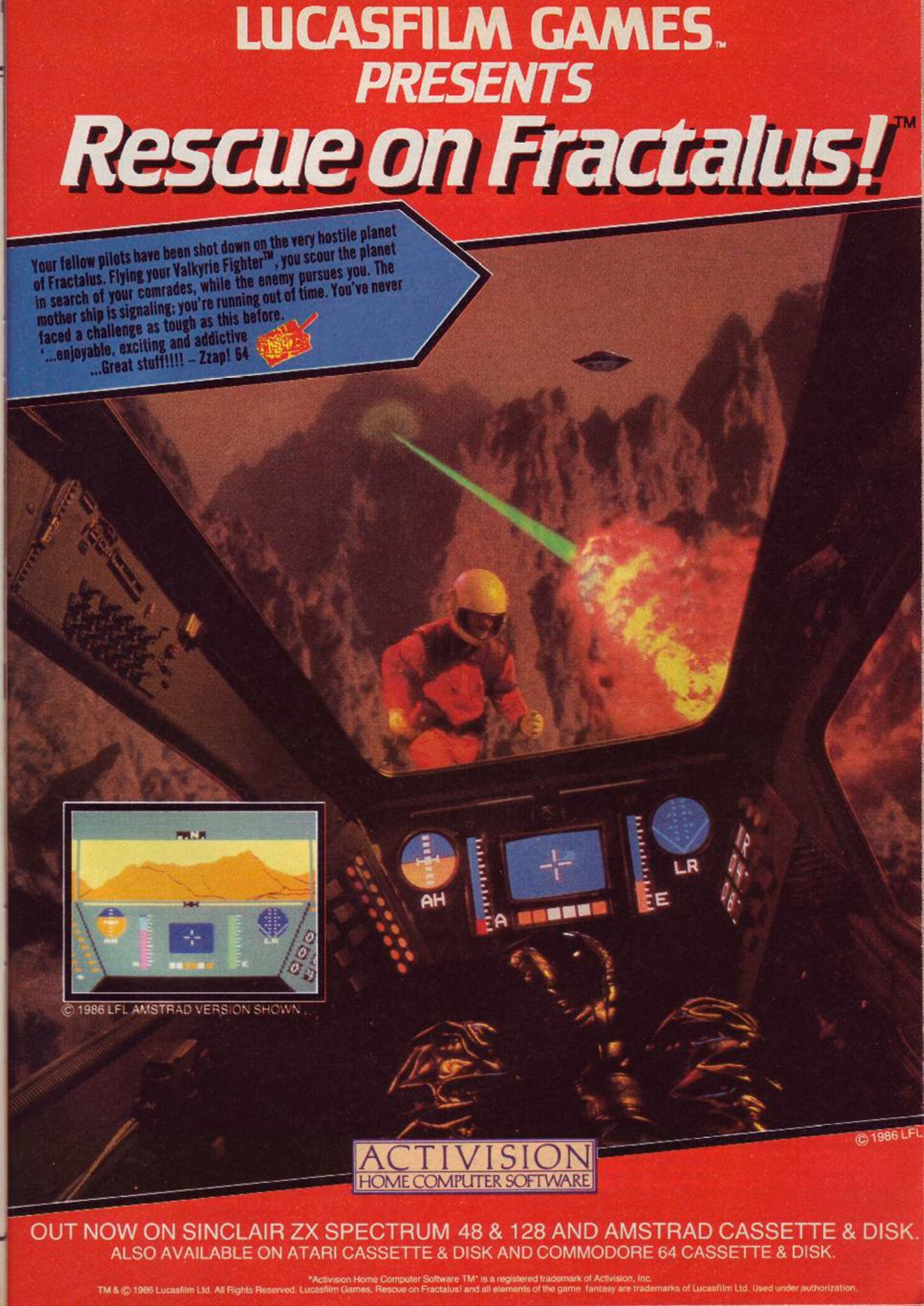
- **Only works with Protext.**
- **Complex command system.**
- **Expensive for what it is.**
- **Documentation is on the weak side.**

MAIL MERGE

Often, you want to send several people near-identical letters, only varying their addresses, names and a few small details. This would normally mean hours of mindless drudgery, or sending out photocopied letters with the differences obviously typed in afterwards.

Mail merge programs take this job off your hands. All you need to do is to write a *template* document – that is, all the bits of the letter which are common to everybody – and a *data file* of all the addresses, names and other details. The program will then print out copies of the template, inserting the details from the data file in the appropriate places.

The result is a personalised letter which, because it all prints out in one go, shows no signs of insertion. More to the point, it takes very little effort on your part, for the same data files can often be used with different templates.


LUCASFILM GAMES™
PRESENTS
Rescue on Fractalus!™
Your fellow pilots have been shot down on the very hostile planet of Fractalus. Flying your Valkyrie Fighter™, you scour the planet in search of your comrades, while the enemy pursues you. The mother ship is signaling; you're running out of time. You've never faced a challenge as tough as this before.
'...enjoyable, exciting and addictive ...Great stuff!!!! – Zzap! 64
AH
A
E
LR
© 1986 LFL AMSTRAD VERSION SHOWN
© 1986 LFL
ACTIVISION
HOME COMPUTER SOFTWARE
OUT NOW ON SINCLAIR ZX SPECTRUM 48 & 128 AND AMSTRAD CASSETTE & DISK.
ALSO AVAILABLE ON ATARI CASSETTE & DISK AND COMMODORE 64 CASSETTE & DISK.
"Activision Home Computer Software TM" is a registered trademark of Activision, Inc.
TM & © 1986 Lucasfilm Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Lucasfilm Games, Rescue on Fractalus! and all elements of the game fantasy are trademarks of Lucasfilm Ltd. Used under authorization.

Many Amstrad owners will naturally think of Amstrad when they start looking for a printer to add to their micro. While the DMP 2000 is a good low-cost machine, there are other choices. Several of these offer advantages over Amstrad's printer.

Choosing a printer isn't just a question for CPC owners, either. Although the PCW8256/8512 comes with its own printer, this is not a particularly robust mechanism and, even in its high-quality mode, may not give good enough type for some uses. If you decide you need a daisywheel print, or a tougher dot-matrix printer for your PCW, you'll have to remember one thing – Amstrad's word processor has no connector for a printer other than the one supplied. Printers are normally connected via a Centronics parallel port or an RS232 serial port. Neither of these is supplied with the PCW, but you can add a bolt-on box, called the CPS 8256, which provides both for £70.

And so to the printers in this survey. It's by no means a comprehensive list but is intended more as a cross-section of useful machines which you might consider as alternatives to the DMP 2000. Each has something to offer. Prices are not exact – you have to shop around when buying printers.

Seikosha SP-1000A

£190-210

Having said that the PCW printer supplied by Amstrad is not the most rugged of machines, it is still more than adequate for most home needs. The mechanism is manufactured by Seikosha in Japan, and is supplied to Amstrad with very little in the way of controlling electronics. The controls are provided on the main circuit board of the 8256/8512.

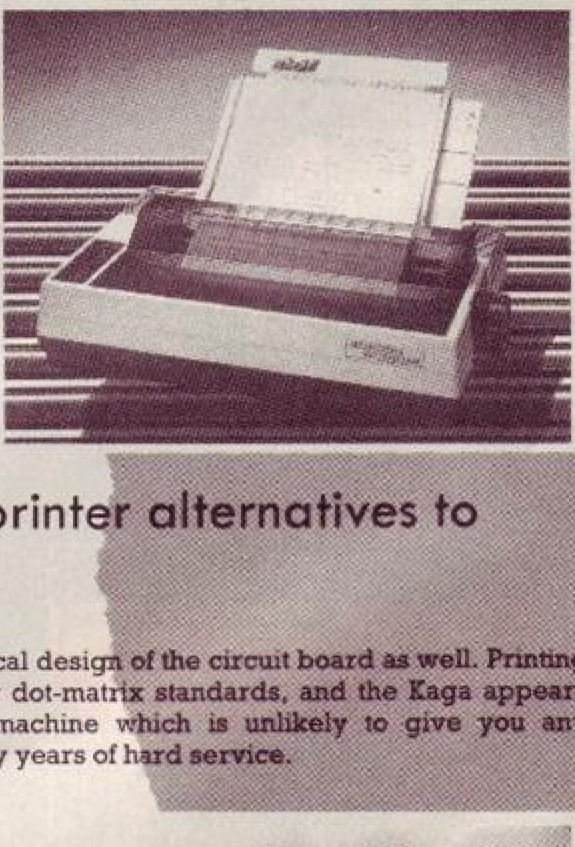
The SP-1000A uses the same mechanism as the PCW printer, but with the necessary controls for connecting it to an 'ordinary' micro.

The printer again uses Epson control codes and offers all the features of an Epson machine, together with NLQ print. The print head is a very lightweight unit, which means that the print is not as dense as it might be, but also means that the printer is quiet. It will print graphics using a standard Epson print dump and may be sent user defined characters for alternative character fonts.

The printer comes with a clip-on tractor, so you can use single sheet or fanfold paper. If you're feeding it single sheets, they are automatically fed into the right position by pulling forward the bail-bar. Print speed is around 100cps, and the DIP switches are easily got at by removing a polythene plug on the back of the casing.

The manual is well written, well printed and covers the printer's features concisely. Seikosha have a good quality, low-cost printer in the SP-1000A. It may not be as fast as some others these days, but still packs a lot of features per pound.

BUDGET PRINTERS



The indefatigable Bertram Carrot surveys the printer alternatives to Amstrad's DMP 2000.

Kaga Taxan KP-810/Canon PW1080A

£200-230

The reason these two machines are lumped together is that they both use the same mechanism and offer identical facilities, but in slightly different boxes. I'll refer to both machines as the Kaga.

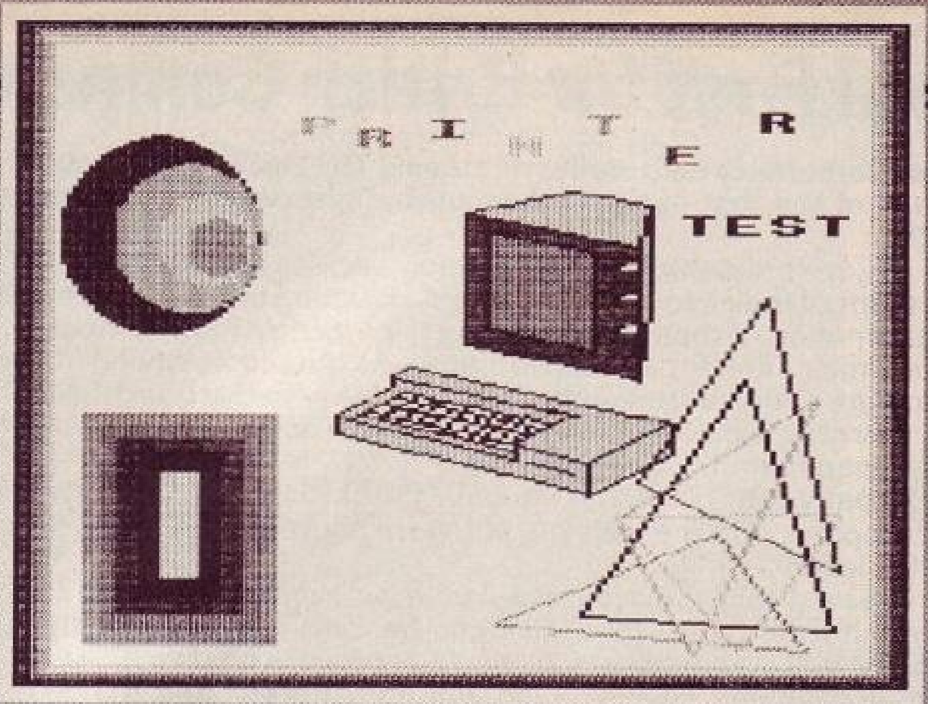
The Kaga rose to fame as a cheaper option for those wanting an Epson FX80. The printer is very Epson compatible, providing all the same control codes and facilities, in addition to a useful NLQ mode, not supplied on the standard FX80.

It will print in any of Epson's graphics modes, using the same printer dumps. You can add an 8K RAM chip so you can send the printer a redefined character set from your micro. This means you can print in just about any typeface you choose.

The Kaga prints at 140 characters per second in draft mode and 24 cps in NLQ. This is a fair turn of speed, and certainly quite a bit faster than the DMP 2000.

The printer can handle single sheet, fanfold or roll paper as standard. The DIP switches are located on the main circuit board, and you have to remove the top of the case to get at them. The procedure is well explained in the 180 page manual, but it's a pity the thought that went into this couldn't have been put into the physical design of the circuit board as well. Printing is pretty quiet by dot-matrix standards, and the Kaga appears very sturdy. A machine which is unlikely to give you any trouble over many years of hard service.






```
Dump took 320.42 secs
This is standard Pica typeface.
This is condensed Pica print.
This is standard Elite typeface.
This is enlarged Elite print.
This is emphasised Pica print.
This is double-strike Pica print.
This is the italic Pica typeface.
This is proportionally-spaced Pica typeface.
This is the superscript font.
This is the subscript font.
This is underlined Pica print.
This is the near letter quality (NLQ) typeface.
```

Sample printout from the Seikosha SP 1000

```
Dump took 320.53 secs
This is standard Pica typeface.
This is condensed Pica print.
This is standard Elite typeface.
This is enlarged Elite print.
This is emphasised Pica print.
This is double-strike Pica print.
This is the italic Pica typeface.
This is proportionally-spaced Pica typeface.
This is the superscript font.
This is the subscript font.
This is underlined Pica print.
This is the near letter quality (NLQ) typeface.
```

Sample printout from the Kaga Taxan KP-810

Printer features to look for

If you're buying a dot-matrix printer, try and choose one which is Epson compatible. Epson had such a head start at making printers that their designs have become an industry 'standard'. Lots of software is written to run with Epson features, and buying a printer which offers the same facilities will ensure you have a wide choice of usable programs.

Similarly, if you're buying a daisywheel printer, check that spare ribbons and daisywheels are available. Two big names in the field are Qume and Diablo, and several manufacturers use compatible spares to make sure they're easy to come by.

A lot of dot-matrix printers now offer Near Letter Quality (NLQ) printing. This feature produces high quality text by printing each line more than once, and interspersing the dots in each character to smooth out the usual dotty appearance. NLQ is useful if you're going to use your printer for correspondence.

When buying a printer you pay for speed. As a comparison, the DMP 2000 can print 100 characters per second (cps). The Seikosha and Shinwa can manage about the same, while the Kaga and Epson can print up to 40% faster. Daisywheels are a lot slower, the average for low-cost machines being about 20 cps.

There are three main ways of feeding paper into a printer: a sheet at a time, from a roll and from a big pad of paper folded like a fan (fanfold). If you want to use roll or fanfold paper you will need special attachments to feed them into your printer. Some manufacturers charge extra for roll holders or 'tractor' units (the gadgets which pull fanfold paper through using the holes on its edges). Check before you buy.

Most printers can be set up by flicking small switches (known as DIP switches) on the circuit boards inside them. Check how easy it is to get at these.

```
!"#$%&'()*+,-./0123456789:;<=>?@ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ[¥]^_'abcdefghijklmno
pqrstuvwxyz{|}~
```

The standard Pica typeface on the Shinwa CPA-80

GRAFIX NEWS

Amstrad musicians take up the baton ...

Having produced the best graphics software with light pen control, which has yet been seen on the Amstrad, the Electric Studio have commissioned the first light pen controlled Music Package, which also looks set to become the market leader.

The MUSIC BOX is available on cassette or disc and boasts an impressive list of features, which include:

464, 664 and 6128 compatible.
3 channel polyphonic sound.
Tone and volume Envelope Designer.*
Internal storage of approximately 8000 notes.
Print out of musical score.
Save score and envelopes to tape or disc.
Use envelopes in own program.
Any key or time signature.
Automatic bar line insertion.
Easy to use Icons with light pen control option.
Cursor music editor.
Share memory of channels in any combination.
Playback: Tempo: Key transposition: Octave.
Demonstration music included.

* The Envelope Designer uses the light pen to draw the graph of the envelopes — no numbers to enter. Sounds can be played while envelopes are edited.

The package can be controlled by either the ESP or DKtronics light pen; by joystick; or by cursor keys which will help all users get the full benefit from the various functions of the program.

THE PROGRAM WILL WORK WITHOUT A LIGHT PEN AND CAN BE PURCHASED SEPARATELY FOR USE WITH JOYSTICK OR KEYBOARD.

The MUSIC BOX is priced at £9.95 for the cassette program or £16.95 for the disc version and for a limited period the MUSIC BOX plus an ESP Light Pen will be available for the price of £19.95 with cassette software or £29.95 with disc based software.

Don't worry Joyce — you're not forgotten!

Final develo[illegible] which will allow the E[illegible] with the Amstr[illegible] now near[illegible] and d[illegible] that pe[illegible] [illegible] fo[illegible] w[illegible] illu[illegible] phics capa[illegible] Light Pen progra[illegible] tool for their busin[illegible]

PCW 8256 LIGHTPEN & GRAPHICS PACKAGE NOW AVAILABLE

Phone for more details

World First for British Company!

At a Press Conference held earlier this week, The Electric Studio announced the launch of the first ever, pixel accurate light pen for the Amstrad, for under £20.

This major breakthrough has been achieved through extensive development of their product since its introduction in September 1985, and is the culmination of months of work by the technical department.

The Technical Director of the company was quoted as saying "Up to now pixel accurate pens for freehand drawing were priced around the £40 mark. We can now produce a light pen capable of total accuracy, for a price that no other light pen manufacturer gets near."

The company confirmed that the ESP "PIXEL" Light Pen was available for £19.95 complete with the cassette software package that has proven to be the market leader.

They stressed that the accuracy would be available on both mono and colour monitors and the CPC 6128 machine specific program with freehand draw ability, will now retail at £29.95 with software on disc.

All future products, commencing with the "PIXEL" pen will be released with French, German and Spanish versions of both program and manual, as The Electric Studio recognises the importance of the European involvement with the Amstrad/Schneider range of computers.

Continued support for existing ESP users

Because of the launch of the new freehand drawing "PIXEL" pen, the Electric Studio will offer a special upgrade facility for existing users of the ESP character accurate Light Pen.

The Upgrade will provide modified pen and software which will transform the unit to a freehand drawing instrument, while the full graphics capabilities of the program remain the same.

Any owner of an ESP character accurate pen, whether in the UK or elsewhere can benefit from this offer by observing the following conditions:

All returns to The Electric Studio, PO Box 96, Luton LU3 2JP.

Cassette Software: Return the Light Pen only.

Disc Software: Return the Light Pen plus a disc and state type of computer.

Any user who has upgraded to a CPC 6128 computer since purchasing a Light Pen will be supplied with a 6128 program provided a blank disc accompanies the returned Light Pen.

Terms and Conditions of Upgrade:

a) The pen must be in working order.

b) Returned units should be mailed in protective packaging. i.e. Jiffy Bag or similar.

c) State clearly name, address and model of computer.

d) Enclose a cheque or P.O. for £5.00 for delivery within the U.K. or £7.00 for overseas delivery.

Electric Studio to support US Giant

6128 owners who have purchased or are considering the purchase of the Digital Research program DR Draw will be delighted by the news of the availability of an ESP Enhancement Pack.

This comprises a pixel accurate light pen with GSX driver on disc, which will allow total control of DR Draw using the light pen instead of cursor key controls.

The cursor is controlled by the light pen which gives almost instant access to all parts of the screen, making menu selection a much speedier process and thus giving additional flexibility to the overall package which is an invaluable time saver for the program user.

8256 users can look forward to a similar enhancement kit being available shortly.

Shinwa CPA-80

£175-200

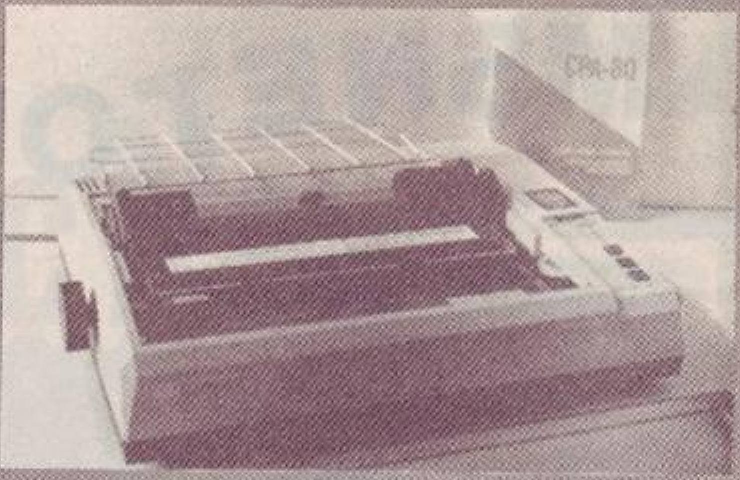
This is another Epson compatible printer, but doesn't include a Near Letter Quality mode. It will work with Epson graphic dumps, however, and you can download your own character sets.

The mechanism includes an integral tractor drive, and single sheets may also be feed in through the top of the cover.

The print speed is quoted at 100 cps, which is on a par with the the Amstrad and Seikosha printers, but the CPA-80 is not particularly quiet. The print head appears quite robust, and the print quality is good, since the pins within the print head are square, rather than the round ones normally found in dot matrix printers. The graphics fonts include Greek and Japanese characters, as well as a selection of block graphics.

The DIP switches on the CPA-80 are replaced by a set of small separate switches under a removable cover on the top casing. The settings are printed on the back of the cover, which is handy.

The controls are positioned on the right of the print mechanism, and include Line Feed, Form Feed and Online, as usual. It's a little odd to find the paper feed knob on the left of the carriage, but I guess this could be an advantage if you're left handed!



The CPA-80 manual is quite small and plagued with bits of 'Japlish' which take some of deciphering. Overall, though, a solid printer if you're not worried about writing letters to your bank manager. At the price, though, you shouldn't need to.

Sanplé Daisystep 2000/Quendata DWP1120

£150-200

Another printer masquerading under two different names. This is the lowest priced daisywheel currently available, discounted to as low as £150 in some places.

Although inexpensive, the Daisystep isn't cheap. The quality of print is very good, and all the normal features of more expensive daisywheels are there, with the exception of proportional spacing. Proportional spacing allows each character its own width, rather than using a fixed width like a typewriter.

The Daisystep is a big machine, mainly due to its 13" carriage. This is wide enough to take A4 paper sideways – useful, among other things, for printing out spreadsheets. As supplied, the printer will only handle single sheet paper, but you can buy a tractor and a single sheet feeder as optional extras.

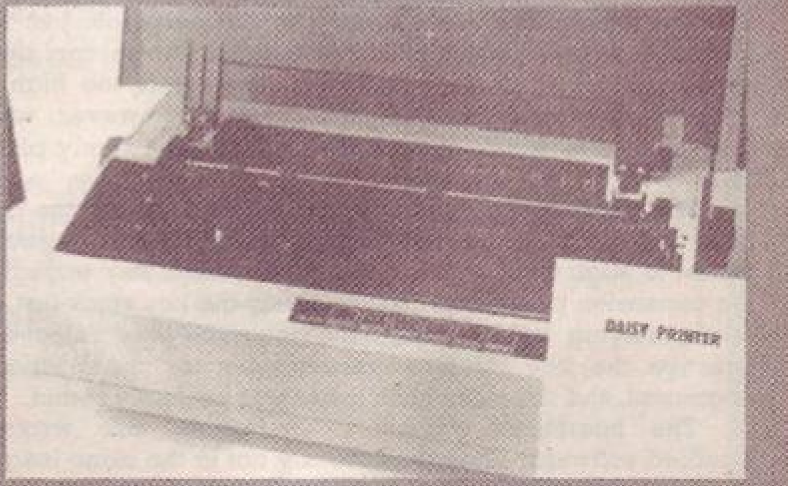
The Daisystep will only print at about 18cps, which is very slow, but still a good deal faster than the average typist. Most people will use the machine for letters, though, and its lack of speed won't then show so much.

Daisywheel printers can't print graphics, of course, but the Daisystep will print double-strike, bold and underlined characters, with a variety of spacings between characters and lines. Its two DIP switches are located under a click-out panel on the back, which makes them very easy to set. The manual is a thin, flimsy affair, but describes all the printer's features.

Considering the Daisystep is the only true daisywheel printer under £300, it's very good value for money. It offers high quality print, albeit slowly, and can cope with large sheets of paper.

Verdict

There are many low-cost printers available to Amstrad users, offering good quality print, graphics and near letter quality text. It would be a shame if potential buyers restricted themselves to the DMP 2000 as their only choice. Although very low cost, there is plenty of choice at only a few pounds more.



Sample printout from the Sanplé Daisystep 2000

Normal text, printed bi-directionally so that the print head moves backwards when printing this line.

Double strike text, which makes the print hammer strike each character twice in the same place, and leave a heavy impression.

Boldface text, which is similar to double strike, except that the print head is displaced by a small amount for the second strike.

Underlined text, which will normally only underline characters, but not spaces. To underline spaces, use the underline character.

You can also combine any **combination of these effects!**

AMSNET ON THE CHEAP



Last month we compared two modem/ interface packages in the £150 bracket. For many people this comparison will be irrelevant, since they simply don't have that much money available for peripherals. If you fall into this category but are still keen to get telecomputing, Cirkit may have just the package for you.

The price includes modem, interface and software. The modem is the old acoustic coupler Protek 1200. (The '1200' refers to the fact that it supports only the Prestel communications standard baud rate of 1200/75, but that'll be enough for many users.) Rather than plugging the modem into a phone socket, you have to plug the handset of your phone into a pair of rubber sockets built into the modem. This places serious restrictions on the type of phone you have to have. While the modem is flexible enough to cope with small variations, the phone must be of the traditional BT type to fit the sockets properly. Trimphones and the like are no use at all.

The other classic problem with acoustic coupler modems is that of outside noise being picked up by the handset. The modem does not make any electrical connection with the phone system – it transmits and recieves information by making noises into the mouthpiece and listening to the earpiece. Just like a human conversation, this information exchange can be disrupted if the level of background noise gets too high. The review copy behaved itself perfectly well, however, with no interference to speak of once the handset was firmly plugged in.

The interface slots on to the expansion port, and the review copy proved to be a very tight fit indeed. The connector is meant to align itself by way of a small plastic key engaging in the expansion port notch. Unfortunately the key stuck fast in the notch, staying behind when the interface was removed. In practice the key is quite unnecessary for the purpose of alignment, and the connection made was perfectly sound.

The interface's designers, Honeysoft, also wrote the bundled software. Though obviously not in the same league as their excellent Honeyview and Honeyterm programs, this is a solid and workmanlike product far above the standard the package's price tag would suggest.

In action the system proved easy to use, and quite adequate for most PRESTEL activities. If you want to download telesoftware or get hard copy, however, you'll need extra software at around the £20 mark, but the basics are there. The software also provides for you to exchange data directly with another Cirkit user, though I didn't have a chance to check this side of the system.

CIRKIT PRESTEL LINK
Cirkit Distribution £35.99 cass, £43.99 disk
CPC 464, 664, 6128

A very basic system, then, but it seems to work well. The modem is battery powered, and this has attracted quite a bit of criticism. The only real drawback to my mind is the need for a particular shape of phone. Telecomputing can be an enjoyable hobby, but £150 is an awful lot to pay, especially considering that there'll be PRESTEL and BT charges as well. Cirkit have brought the set-up price within reach – if the package is a bit rough and ready, that's only to be expected.

Getting hold of one

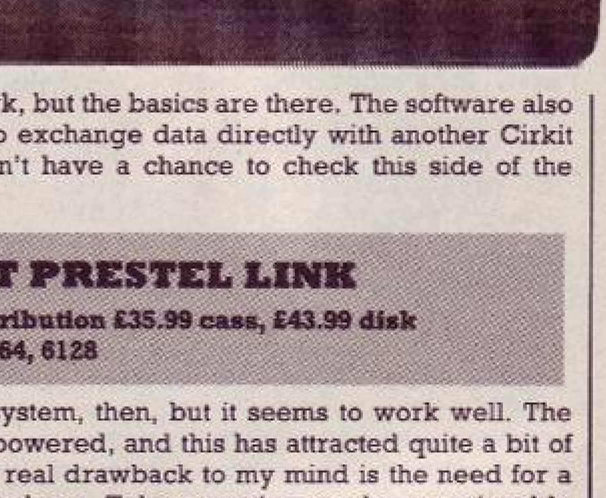
You may find it hard to buy this modem at your local computer shop. You can always order from Cirkit direct. The address is: **Cirkit Holdings PLC, Park Lane, Broxbourne, Herts, EN10 7NQ. Tel: 0992 444111**

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ **Extremely cheap.**
- ▶ **Good software, written by Honeysoft.**
- ▶ **Works well and is easy to use.**
- ▶ **Has BT approval.**

B A D N E W S

- ▶ **Needs the right shape of phone.**
- ▶ **Not very sophisticated.**
- ▶ **Telesoftware capability costs extra.**
- ▶ **No 300/300 baud rate for bulletin board use.**



ANTI-GLARE SCREEN
Lightwave Leisure, £18.95 – £32.60

This anti-glare screen fits over the front of the Amstrad monitors. It comes in four versions, 12 and 14 inch models for both mono and colour screens. We looked at the 14 inch colour version which worked very well on our colour monitors. It considerably reduced reflections on the screen and made the display softer and easier to watch for long periods.

The only drawback is the price – £32.60 for the 14 inch colour version, £23.95 for the 12 inch colour, £21.60 for the 14 inch mono and £18.95 for the 12 inch mono. This is pretty steep and relegates it to a nice luxury if you can afford it. Good for the eyes but bad for the wallet.

BW

Type-ins

This month's listings have got something for everyone. On the serious side there's *Unerase* for disc users and *Key-RSX* for key-definers. If that doesn't sound like you, try the snappy graphics of *Trix* or the two ridiculously short *Oneliners*. Last but not least, there's a special treat for all you regular type-ins readers – a handy Reset function to add to March's much-loved *Drumkit*.

Notes on entering the listings

You must take care to enter the listings EXACTLY as they are printed. A single comma or bracket out of place will prevent them working. Remember to press the Enter key (or on the 6128 the Return key) after completing each numbered line of the program.

If, after you've tried to RUN the program you get a message saying eg "Improper argument in 20", that doesn't necessarily mean there is an error in line 20. Line 20 is where Arnold had got to when he realised a mistake had been made. The mistake could well be somewhere else – almost anywhere else, in fact. You may have no choice but to check the listing character by character from the first line.

A little knowledge of BASIC goes a long way when it comes to debugging, but there are a couple of tips novices can use. For one thing, "Syntax error in 20" really does mean a mistake actually *in* line 20. Syntax errors are always in the line reported in the error message. Another error you can track down easily is "Subscript out of range". Nine times out of ten, this means an error either in the line reported, or in a line elsewhere which contains the word DIM.

Where there are a lot of DATA statements to be typed in, some programs use **checksumming**, a kind of self-test to find typing errors. Where you get a message like "Checksum error in line 160" you know you've probably typed line 160 wrong. Similarly, "Checksum error" on its own means there's a mistake somewhere in the data statements, but doesn't tell you where.

Finally, always save the program BEFORE you try to run it. Some of the type-ins we print will self-destruct as soon as they've done their job, so you'll need a copy to use another time. You have been warned!

DRUMKIT REVISITED

If you typed in John Keneally's *Drumkit* from the March issue of AA, you'll have noticed something annoying. Namely, there's no easy way to shut the thing up. What you need, especially if you don't like the start-up rhythms, is a Reset function to set a whole channel to silence in one go. These extra lines from Peter Newman of Dungannon let you do just that. All you need to do is load in *Drumkit*, type the extra lines and then save the modified listing – couldn't be easier.



```
131 IF a$="R" THEN GOSUB 1010:GOTO 60
.
.
.
570 LOCATE 12,18:PRINT"3,F=Slow/Fast. C=Channel. L=Load. W=s
ave .R=Reset."
.
.
.
1010 REM Reset Channel Routine
1020 j=-1:i=REMAIN(0):WINDOW#1,65,80,10,15:CLS#1
1030 PRINT#1,"Reset Channel":PRINT#1,"Number (3/1/2) ?"
1040 WHILE j=-1
1050 IF INKEY(64)=0 THEN j=1
1060 IF INKEY(65)=0 THEN j=2
1070 IF INKEY(32)=0 THEN j=0
1080 WEND
1090 CLS#1
1100 FOR k=0 TO 47:rythm(k,j)=0:NEXT k:GOSUB 640
1110 EVERY itime GOSUB 760:RETURN
1120 REM End of Reset
```

UNERASE

If you use disks, you need this program. Quite simply, if you erase a file accidentally, *Unerase* will get it back for you.

The program is pretty well fool-proof to type in, having not one but two sets of checksums. It's easy to use as well, but there are a couple of points you'll need to watch. Firstly, you can run into problems if there are two erased files of the same name, or if you've written to the disc since erasing the file. Secondly, the program as given here only works on system or vendor format discs. You should use the substitute line 190 if you want *Unerase* to handle data (ie non-CP/M) format discs.

Other than this substitution, you shouldn't need to modify the program yourself. Indeed, as its author Alexander Clark points out, it is very unwise to try. You'll need to be well up on machine code and disc firmware to achieve anything, and a botched rewrite could easily wipe out important data.

As a general precaution against typing errors, try the program out on a disc you could afford to lose data from. If it works, you'll get eg FILE.BAS restored as FILE.ERA – and you'll wonder how you ever got by without it!

```
10 MEMORY &9FFF:RESTORE 450:l=430:i=0.25:chck=1
20 FOR x=&A500 TO &A518 STEP 8
30 FOR y=0 TO 7
40 i=i*(-1)
50 READ x$:IF LEN(x$)<>2 THEN chk=0:GOTO 110
60 z=VAL("&"+x$)
70 chck=chck*((z+1)↑i)
80 POKE x+y,z:chk=chk+z
90 NEXT
100 READ ch,check
110 IF ch<>chk THEN PRINT"Checksum error in line";l:END
120 IF INT(100000*chck)<>check THEN PRINT"Checksum error in
line";l:END
130 l=l+10:chk=0:chck=1
140 NEXT
150 MODE 1
160 INPUT"What is the name of the file you want tounerase (e
xcluding suffix)";a$
170 IF LEN(a$)>8 OR a$="" THEN 150
180 a$=UPPER$(a$)
190 FOR a=&41 TO &44
200 POKE &A51E,&84:POKE &A516,a
210 CALL &A500
220 FOR b=&A000 TO &A200 STEP &20
230 IF PEEK(b+1)=&E5 THEN 250
240 IF PEEK(b)=&E5 THEN GOSUB 330
250 NEXT
260 IF c=1 THEN GOSUB 400
270 c=0
280 NEXT
290 IF yn=0 THEN PRINT"File does not exist" ELSE CAT
300 yn=0
310 PRINT "Do you want to unerase another file ?"
320 a$=INKEY$:IF a$="" THEN 320 ELSE IF LOWER$(a$)="y" THEN
150 ELSE END
330 b$=""
340 FOR d=b+1 TO b+8
350 IF PEEK(d)=&20 THEN 370
360 b$=b$+CHR$(PEEK(d))
370 NEXT
380 IF b$=a$ THEN 410
390 RETURN
400 POKE &A51E,&85:CALL &A500:POKE &A51E,&84:yn=1:RETURN
410 POKE b,0
420 POKE b+9,&45:POKE b+10,&52:POKE b+11,&41
430 c=1
440 RETURN
450 DATA 21,1e,a5,cd,d4,bc,D0,22,1075,64034
460 DATA 1B,A5,79,32,1D,A5,21,00,0590,79692
470 DATA A0,1E,00,16,02,0E,41,DF,0516,294431
480 DATA 1B,A5,C9,3C,C0,07,84,00,0784,15369

Substitute line 190

190 POKE &A514,0:FOR a=&C1 TO &C4
```

ONELINERS

Two great little programs here from Dick Ruck of Brighton. They're both just one line long, and they both actually do something. *Etch-a-Sketch* lets you draw to your heart's content. Use "A" and "Z" to move up and down, or "<" and ">" to move left and right. If you draw off one edge of the screen, you reappear on the opposite edge – try it. *Typing Tutor* is even more impressive, being a machine code program complete with loader, all on one line. It lets you practice your typing, and is very responsive indeed. Be warned, though, you can only get out of this one by resetting the machine – so save it first!

```
Etch-a-Sketch

10 FOR j=2 TO 5:READ a(j),b(j):NEXT:INK 0,13:INK 1,0:BORDER
13:MODE 1:LOCATE 15,3:PRINT"Etch-a-Sketch":ORIGIN 63,71,64,5
74,325,71:CLG 3:x=255:y=127:WHILE-1:d=INSTR(" a.z,",INKEY$):
x=(x+a(d)) AND 511:y=(y+b(d)) AND 255:PLOT x,y:WEND:DATA 0,2
,2,0,0,-2,-2,0

Typing Tutor

10 MEMORY &7FFF:MODE 2:LOCATE 35,2:PRINT"TYPING TUTOR":FOR j
=&8000 TO &8013:READ k$:POKE j,VAL("&"+k$):NEXT:CALL &8000:D
ATA cd,81,bb,cd,7b,bb,cd,6,bb,cd,5a,bb,fe,d,20,f3,3e,a,18,f5
```

TRIX

Philip Gardner of Bridgwater, not a million miles from AA HQ, sent us in this sharp little mini-listing for drawing patterns. *Trix* draws seven different patterns, holding each one until you press a key. Once it's done all seven, it repeats itself. If you want to make patterns of your own, try altering the data in line 130 – all the numbers are angles in degrees. Pointless, of course, but fun!

```
10 REM TRIX - By P.Gardner
20 REM (Generates 7 patterns)
30 MODE 2:INK 0,0:INK 1,26:BORDER 0
40 DEG
50 FOR B=1 TO 7:READ D
60 CLS:INK 1,26
70 n=1
80 MOVE 320,200
90 FOR a=0 TO 20000 STEP D
100 n=n+1
110 DRAW 320+n*SIN(a),200+n*COS(a)
120 NEXT
130 DATA 150,160,100,175,75,50,45
140 WHILE INKEY$="":WEND
150 NEXT
160 RESTORE
170 GOTO 50
```

KEY-RSX

If you do a lot of key redefining, the chances are you often find it hard to remember which keys do what. Of course, you could always press the relevant keys and see what characters are produced. This has the drawback that any control codes – carriage returns and the like – are obeyed rather than shown. What you need is a way of listing the *expansion strings* – the key definitions, that is – in such a form that you can read and edit control codes. Philip Pepperell of Aylesbury has sent us just that.

The program sets up an RSX called |KEY. To get the expansion string of a key, type in and run the program. Then type **|KEY,n** where **n** is the ASCII value of the key in question. If you type |KEY,140 for example, you'll get the [ctrl][enter] expansion used for loading games from tape. It comes up as **KEY &8C,"RUN" + CHR$(&22) + CHR$(&0D)** – so you can edit it using the cursor/copy keys, and then hit return to enter the new definition.

```
10 total=0:address=&A000
15 SYMBOL AFTER 256:MEMORY &9FFF:SYMBOL AFTER 240
20 FOR f=1 TO 30
30 FOR g=1 TO 8
40 READ a
50  total=total+a
60 IF a>256 THEN PRINT "Checksum error in line ";140+f*10;"
 element";g:END
70 POKE address,a
80  address=address+1
90 NEXT
100 READ b
110 IF total<>b THEN PRINT "Checksum error in line ";140+f*
10:END
120 total=0
130 NEXT
140 CALL &A000
150 DATA  1, 10, 160, 33, 19, 160, 205, 209, 797
160 DATA  188, 201, 15, 160, 195, 23, 160, 75, 1017
170 DATA  69, 217, 0, 243, 165, 10, 160, 254, 1118
180 DATA  1, 192, 221, 78, 0, 205, 33, 160, 890
190 DATA  201, 33, 186, 160, 205, 191, 160, 121, 1257
200 DATA  205, 212, 160, 62, 44, 205, 90, 187, 1165
210 DATA  6, 0, 121, 33, 0, 0, 205, 18, 383
220 DATA  187, 48, 26, 254, 32, 56, 56, 254, 913
230 DATA  34, 40, 52, 245, 125, 254, 0, 40, 790
240 DATA  18, 241, 203, 64, 32, 24, 205, 90, 877
250 DATA  187, 35, 121, 24, 225, 62, 10, 205, 869
260 DATA  90, 187, 201, 241, 229, 33, 185, 160, 1326
270 DATA  205, 191, 160, 225, 24, 228, 229, 245, 1507
280 DATA  33, 161, 160, 205, 191, 160, 241, 205, 1356
290 DATA  90, 187, 6, 0, 225, 24, 218, 229, 979
300 DATA  245, 125, 254, 0, 40, 25, 203, 64, 956
310 DATA  40, 26, 33, 163, 160, 205, 191, 160, 978
320 DATA  241, 205, 212, 160, 33, 170, 160, 205, 1386
330 DATA  191, 160, 225, 6, 1, 24, 186, 33, 826
340 DATA  171, 160, 24, 233, 33, 177, 160, 24, 982
350 DATA  228, 43, 162, 43, 67, 72, 82, 36, 733
360 DATA  40, 166, 169, 67, 72, 82, 36, 40, 672
370 DATA  166, 34, 43, 67, 72, 82, 36, 40, 540
380 DATA  166, 162, 75, 69, 89, 32, 166, 229, 988
390 DATA  197, 245, 126, 71, 230, 127, 205, 90, 1291
400 DATA  187, 203, 120, 32, 3, 35, 24, 242, 846
410 DATA  241, 193, 225, 201, 245, 230, 240, 15, 1590
420 DATA  15, 15, 15, 205, 225, 160, 241, 230, 1106
430 DATA  15, 198, 48, 254, 58, 250, 234, 160, 1217
440 DATA  198, 7, 205, 90, 187, 201, 0,0, 888
```

REWARD

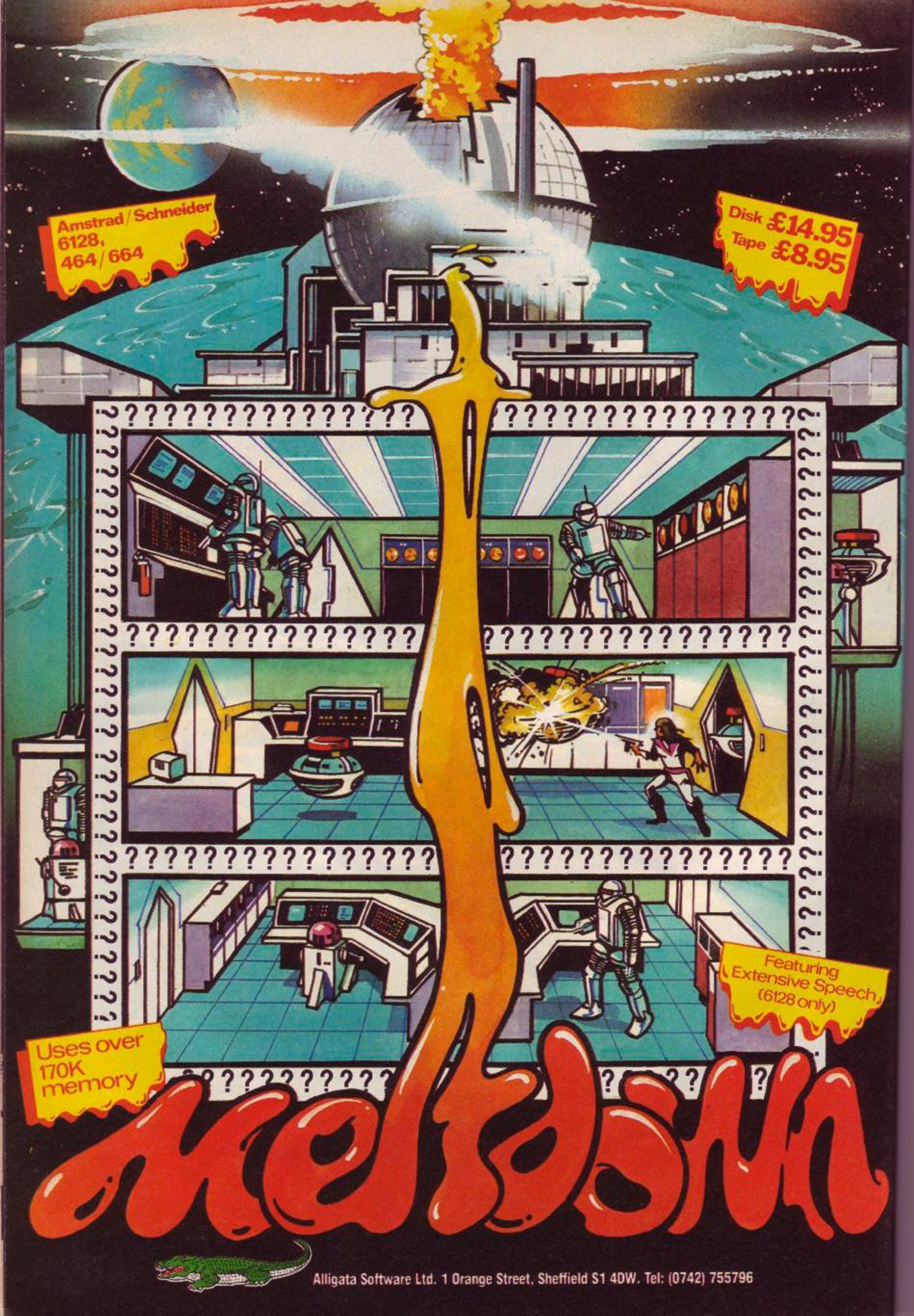
If you can program why not put your mind to contributing to these pages? Major listings could earn you anything from £50 to £100, while each mini-listing we print earns the author a tenner. (Roughly speaking a mini-listing is one that's no more than 20 lines long. A major listing can be any length, but it has to very good, offering something that will be of major use/interest to a majority of Amstrad owners.)

Please note that you may only submit programs which are 100 per cent your original work and which haven't been submitted (or printed) elsewhere.

You should submit your program on tape or disk, accompanied by a print-out or neatly written copy of the listing. If you want your program returned you must also include a suitable stamped, self-addressed envelope or jiffy bag.

Send it all to:
Type-ins Editor
Amstrad Action
Somerton
Somerset
TA11 7PS


DO YOU WANT TO BE A HERO?
Biggles
The result of unique co-operation between three ace software developers and the Biggles film production company, Biggles – The Untold Story will knock you right out of the air! It's a multi-part arcade strategy game in which each part must be completed to reach your final goal.
In the air, on the rooftops, on the ground, or in the trenches
YOU CAN BE A HERO!
Coming in May
Commodore 64
Spectrum 48K
£9.95 tape, £12.95 disk
£9.95 tape
Coming in June
Amstrad CPC
£9.95 tape, £14.95 disk
MIRRORSOFT
Purnell Book Centre, Paulton, Bristol BS18 5LQ


Amstrad / Schneider
6128,
464 / 664
Disk £14.95
Tape £8.95
Featuring
Extensive Speech
(6128 only)
Uses over
170K
memory
Meltdown
Alligata Software Ltd. 1 Orange Street, Sheffield S1 4DW. Tel: (0742) 755796

THE ALL-ACTION REVIEWING SYSTEM



There's been so much hot software around this month that the Mastergame was one of the toughest decisions we've ever had to make. However sneaking it by a narrow line call is *Bounder* which has some of the most unusual and addictive action you'll ever see.

The raves are impressive reading too with enough great games to make it a really hot summer ahead. The first, inappropriately enough, is *Winter Games* with its beautiful graphic backgrounds, while the *Alien Highway* and *Turbo Esprit* will have you burning up the roadways. *Zoids* has also arrived and proves that they aren't just for kids, while yet another great compilation should be flocking off the shelves in *Computer Hits 10:2.*

1. EXPERT GAMEPLAY. No game gets written up until it's had a long and thorough test. Take software editor Bob Wade. Despite his tender years and sensitive soul, he's pretty deadly with a joystick and happens to have played virtually every Amstrad game ever released. As they say down in these parts, BW reaches the parts other reviewers can't touch.

2. EXTRA OPINIONS. It's always dangerous to rely on just one reviewer – tastes vary enormously. So all the games we review are looked at by at least two people – Bob Wade and Andrew Wilton – who quite often disagree with each other, and when they do, they say so!

3. LABELLED SCREEN SHOTS. It's obviously important to print screen-shots, but often they can be hard to make sense of. Labelling the different elements can make all the difference.

4. CLEAR SUMMARIES. Ever read a review where you ended up confused about the verdict? No chance of that happening here. To make our own views crystal clear we include a concise summary under the Good News/Bad News headings.

5. RATINGS BOXES. We rate our games using percentages for extra flexibility and precision. And with so many games to work through, it's a help to see at a glance which are good and which aren't. Our ratings boxes do this – just look out for the games with long bars and dark tips.

6. GREEN SCREEN VIEW. Some people have to make do with a green screen monitor for their games. Our Green Screen View lets them know if they're worth the effort of loading.

AA Ratings – how they work

GRAPHICS. What the game looks like: colour, definition, animation, imagination, smoothness. Only part of a game's graphic quality is apparent from the printed screen-shots – obviously these can't show thing like smoothness of movement.
SONICS. Game sound. To get a high rating a program will probably need a wide variety of well-chosen sound effects and a pleasing musical sound-track. Effects which are annoying or old hat may seriously affect this rating's health.
GRAB FACTOR. Does the game really GRAB you? Are you hooked? How ADDICTIVE is it? Grab Factor refers to the intensity of the desire for 'one more go'. And although it's not a measure of 'instant appeal' Grab Factor won't be rated highly on programs that are EXTREMELY difficult to get into. The basic test is this: after you've loaded up a new game, read the instructions and played it for half an hour, does it then irresistibly draw you back for more?
STAYING POWER. A game may be astonishingly addictive for a while (and therefore have a high Grab Factor) and yet lack depth and therefore lose interest fairly quickly. Staying Power tells you how LONG interest in the game is likely to last. This depends on such matters as the number of screens and levels, the variety of the task, the degree of long-term challenge. In short the game's DEPTH. An addictive game with only a couple of screens will get a high Grab Factor and low Staying Power. One with a 1000-screen playing area and which takes a lot of getting into would be the other way round. **AA RATING.** This is our overall verdict on the game, the result of a very hard sum involving all the other ratings, plus factors like price, originality, quality of packaging and instructions and anything else we can think of. It's normally pretty close to the Grab Factor and Staying Power ratings, because these are how most people judge the worth of a game. Getting an AA Rating above 80% earns a game the much sought after label of AA RAVE, while the highest rated game in any month becomes our MASTERGAME – we go through agonies before selecting that one.

Compatibility

All the games reviewed in this issue are compatible across the whole CPC range with the exception of *3D Clock Chess* which is for the PCW 8256 only.

SABOTEUR

Durell, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This arcade-exploration game has you playing a saboteur who has to find a disc containing data on rebel leaders, (who or where we aren't told) in a security complex. The complex is heavily guarded but you must overcome its obstacles to get the disc, plant a bomb and escape.

The game begins with the saboteur clad in Ninja garb leaping from an iflatable dinghy into the water beneath a wooden pier. From here on you're in control and the first task is to climb the pier and enter the security complex. Once inside the search begins through a maze of rooms, corridors, tunnels and ladders.



The black clad saboteur on his hazardous mission

The game can be completed in several ways, each one giving a different score depending on the tasks completed. At its simplest you can just head for the escape helicopter on the roof of the building. This won't bring many dividends though and much higher scores are attained by attempting the harder tasks. The disc is in the computer centre and getting that out of the building will bring more points. If you manage to find the time bomb it can be dropped in the disc's place for yet more points before finally escaping.

SECOND OPINION

It's pretty obviously a direct conversion from the Spectrum with no serious attempt made to exploit Arnold's extra graphics capabilities. An uninteresting screen might not matter if the action was pulsating, but it isn't.

AW

The whole operation is performed against the clock which is replaced by the bomb's timer fuse if it is set. If either of these runs out the game ends but once you've got an idea of what you're doing the time limits are fairly reasonable. The other way of ending the game is by running out of energy and this can happen because of three different causes.

Security guards wander around some sections and can reduce your energy by punching, kicking, throwing things and shooting at you. However a quick kick, punch or thrown object of your own will lay them out permanently. Dogs also patrol some areas and will savage you given a chance. These can be laid out with a downwardly directed object or jumped over. Security weapons mounted in the ceiling also fire at you but they just have to be avoided and cannot be destroyed.

The objects that the saboteur can throw come in several varieties, bricks, rocks, knives, pointed stars, pipes and grenades. They all have the same satisfying effect of reducing the opposition by one. The energy that is used up in fights can be replenished by standing around in an empty room or corridor but this wastes valuable time.

Most of the time the large and quite nicely animated character gets about by running and climbing ladders. However there are two underground trains to travel in and also a stanchions and gantries (platforms) section where a lot of jumping is required. The guards and dogs are quite well done but the room backgrounds are very regular and only some of them contain interesting features.

There are nine different skill levels which affect the ferocity of the complex's defences and the position of the time bomb. It's quite an ordinary arcade exploration game that may provide some interest until you crack it but lacks real depth in the task and gameplay.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Oh dear. Several screens are completely unplayable. Silly...

AW

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ Some large, animated characters.
- ▶ Reasonable game size and complexity.

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Disappointing backgrounds and colour schemes.
- ▶ Just exploration and little to think about.
- ▶ Positioning for getting up and down ladders can be finicky and annoying.

GRAPHICS	56%
SONICS	42%
GRAB FACTOR	51%
STAYING POWER	57%
A A RATING	53%

FORBIDDEN PLANET

Design Design, £7.95 cass, £14.95 disk, joystick or keys

Design Design are real stalwarts of the Amstrad market and have consistently produced good value products. Their two latest products differ vastly in nature, one being an arcade adventure and this one an out and out shoot-em-up. As usual there are many additional features that add value to the package and may make you laugh a little too.

There's no mistaking the origins of the game, it's an obvious *Dark Star* derivative that attempts to improve on the classic space shoot-em-up. In true Design Design style it has some extremely silly features and comments on the instructions, high score table and game options but if you've got one of their other games you'll have seen it all before.

SECOND OPINION

Yes, it's another round of shooting towers, dodging flak and flying through shapes. Your turning circle must be a good 100 miles across, and the flak's so thick you could get out and walk on it. Musn't complain though, because it's only the difficulty that makes it worth playing. I preferred Dark Star. Come to that, I preferred the Invaders.

AW

Two excellent additions it has are the games *Halls of the Things* and *Invaders* which are thrown in as a bonus. This enhances the value of the package and many nostalgia-freaks may find themselves playing *Invaders* more than they do the main game.

If you remember the planet surface

2112 AD

Design Design, £7.95 cass, £14.95 disc, joystick or keys

Everyone's into icons these days, even the wacky boys (copyrighted BBC TV quiz game phrase) at Design Design. It's also a bit of a departure for them in that this is a true arcade adventure rather than their usual "shoot anything that moves" game.

Surprisingly the scenario is fairly boring and involves the familiar plot of a computer taking over the UK with you the hero (yawn, bore) who has to stop it by collecting nine control codes. This is the heart of the game because the codes have to be found in a computing complex that is presented using a rather novel 3D technique.

Each room is viewed side on and is just one screen wide but has a lot more depth. If you walk into or out of the room it scrolls to reveal more of the room. This is done using

SECOND OPINION

I wasn't all that impressed by this one. There's no real urgency about any of it, and I didn't find it all that exciting graphically. Icon fans will go a bundle over the control system, but the lack of interesting gameplay or locations left me cold. It's very competently done, but I didn't get anything out of it – except a sincere desire to wreck Poddy.

AW

some clever perspective so that as the screen scrolls, objects and scenery pop into view or disappear from it. This system works quite well and you should find that with a bit of walking around everything in the room becomes visible at some stage.

The bottom of the screen is given over to the information section and the icon menus. These are how you keep a check on the man you control and his faithful companion Poddy, the mechanical dog. There are a number of controls available for

from *Dark Star* then you'll recognise this planet because it takes the same form. There are no space sequences on this game but the planet itself is much larger and packed with more features. The aim is to skim the planet surface in search of pieces of the Evil Lord's final message and then to crack the code that protects them.

The codes are collected by just flying through them on specific zones on the map but most of the time you'll be quite fully occupied shooting at – and avoiding – the defences. These consist mostly of towers of different shapes and sizes that blast deadly accurate missile fire at you. Many of these can be shot but for the most part you'll be happy to try to avoid everything.

The planet is also equipped with force fields (plasma guides) that have to be flown through. Anything that manages to hit your ship will damage its shields which can quickly disappear because of the heavy opposition you face. Energy can be replenished at various energy zones on the map but mostly you won't have time to get to one before the end arrives. Other features include dislocation zones, teleports to you and me, that plonk the ship down elsewhere on the planet and not always to your advantage.

The action is very fast and furious with everything being thrown at you but at times the planet surface becomes totally invisible leaving you with a black screen. The gameplay is extremely tough but not unaddictive, its major problem being the control of the ship which is extremely slow to make turns. There's not much strategy involved, just a lot of blasting and moving but fans of the genre will like it. Along with the other two games it makes a pleasing package but if you've got *Dark Star* already you may feel more than a little cheated if you buy it.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Crucial shapes are invisible, and so is your energy status. Not really playable.

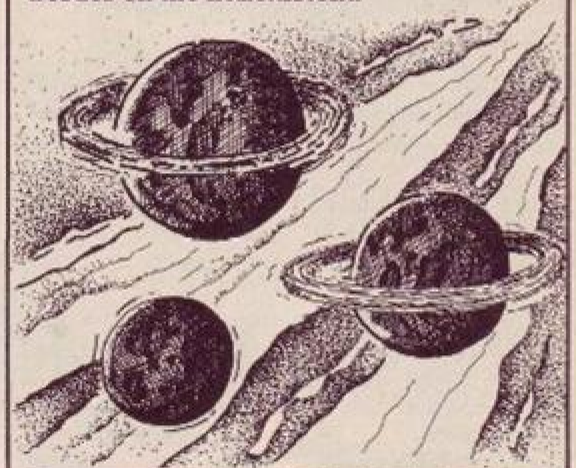
AW

G O O D N E W S

- **Two bonus games thrown in.**
- **Fast and furious action.**
- **Weird and humourous features.**
- **Tough game aim that will take some cracking.**

B A D N E W S

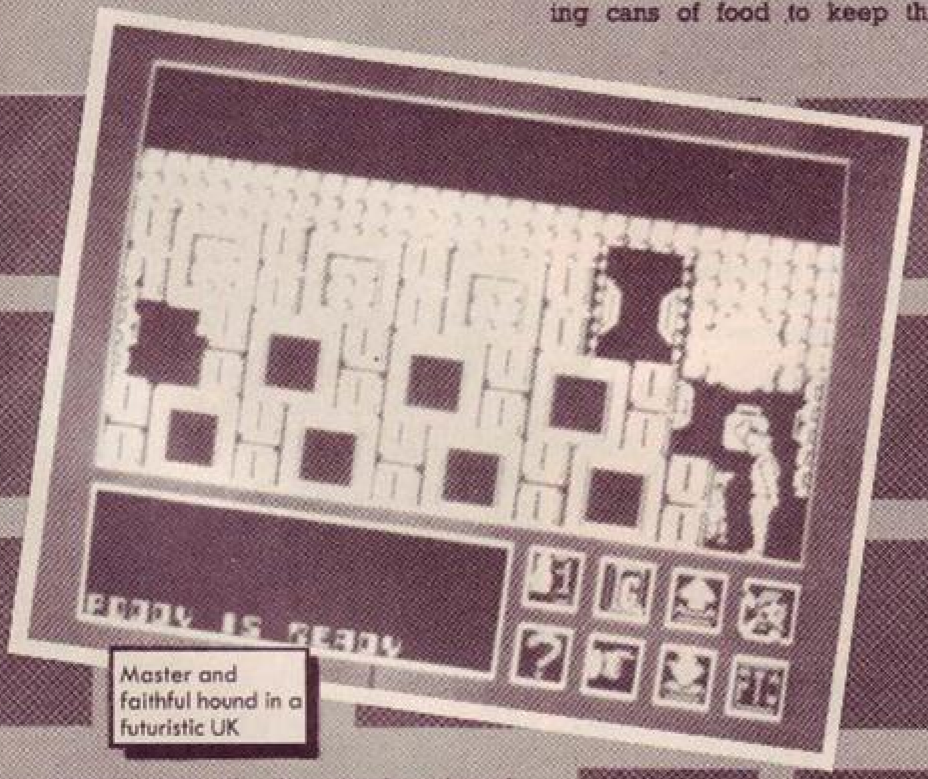
- **Too similar to *Dark Star* for comfort.**
- **Difficult control and heavy defences make it prohibitively difficult.**
- **On screen graphics sometimes border on the nonexistent.**



GRAPHICS	62%
SONICS	31%
GRAB FACTOR	72%
STAYING POWER	66%
A A RATING	68%

manipulating objects and the two characters and also ones for saving, loading or restarting games.

Poddy is the most important and the most annoying feature of the game. He is essential to your task because he can carry lots of objects but he's likely to send the most loyal dog lover crazy. He will follow you around –sort of – but needs a lot of coaxing, particularly when getting him between rooms. Then just when you want him to buzz off and give you freedom of movement he'll start dogging your heels and getting in the way. He looks very much like the Doctor Who dog K9 but some of us would willingly rearrange his features with a spanner.



Master and faithful hound in a futuristic UK

The rooms are connected by doors in the sides and tops of them which can mostly be walked through but are sometimes locked. Some rooms have machines in them controlled by the computer and therefore hostile to you. Both these problems need objects to deal with them – the doors need keys to unlock them and if immobilised by a robot you need a first aid kit to get you going again.

Other important things to do are getting cans of food to keep the character going and charging Poddy's batteries at handy wall sockets. There are many other objects to be found like bombs, a light bulb and a cashpoint card but where and how to use them is pretty difficult to work out. This may mean it will take you a while to get really into the game.

The graphics are beautifully designed and use well-chosen colours. Movement is a little slow but well animated, and after all you don't need to go anywhere in a hurry. The icon system works well but the adventure element seems obscure and difficult to get to grips with. Poddy is the real problem though – he may be house trained but he'll never make the Cruft's obedience school.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

The rooms are very uninspiring in mono, but the gameplay is unaffected.

AW

G O O D N E W S

- **Well designed and attractive rooms.**
- **Good use of icons for Poddy and the man.**
- **Difficult exploring and puzzling task.**
- **Nice animation on main character.**

B A D N E W S

- **Poddy's control will drive you up the wall.**
- **Task seems obscure and too difficult at times.**

GRAPHICS	76%
SONICS	12%
GRAB FACTOR	55%
STAYING POWER	76%
A A RATING	73%

NICK FALDO PLAYS THE OPEN

Mind Games/Argus Press, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

The Open in question is the one at Royal St. Georges last year – pity they didn't get Sandy Lyle to put his name to the game because he won it. The course is recreated in glorious Amstrad pixels with all its hazards and holes intact – you'll need to go to Sandwich to check out the real thing though.

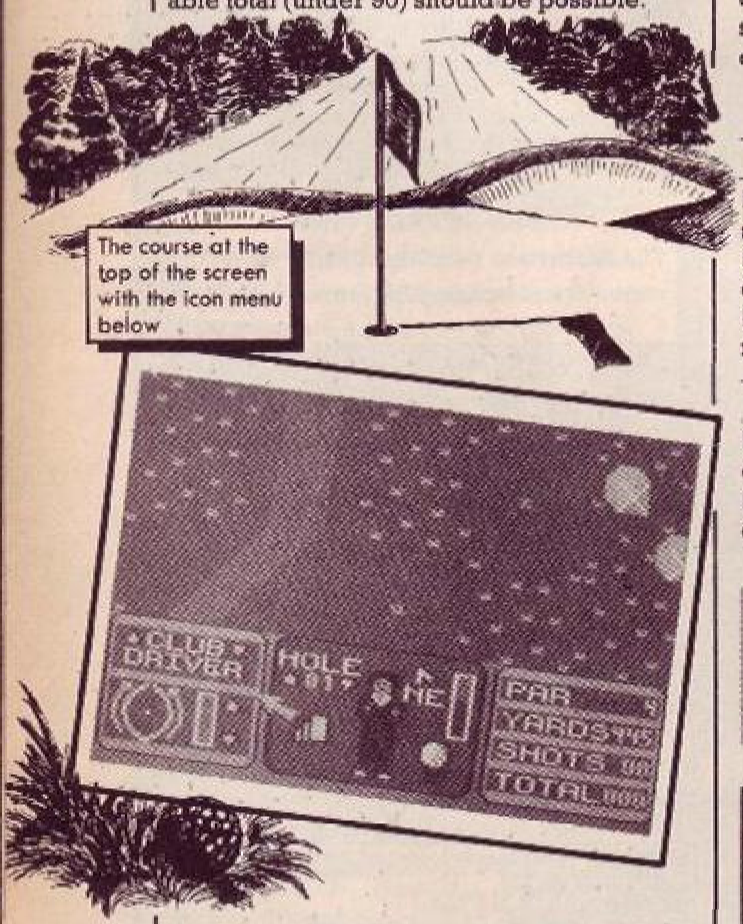
The game is icon driven through a box at the bottom of the screen with the top two thirds of the display being devoted to the course. This shows the area around the ball and using a map icon it can be zoomed out to reveal the whole of the hole you are currently playing.

SECOND OPINION

Golf strikes me as one of those games that really doesn't belong on a computer. I mean, this one's streets ahead of any other golf game, but it's still just dull and clumsy on the little screen. Where's the thrill of the long drive, the skill of the putt? Where's the 19th hole?

AW

The course can be played in four different ways: a full round, holes 1-9, holes 10-18 and individual holes at a time. The par is 70 but it will take plenty of practice at each hole before you'll get close to that because it is even easier than the real thing to make a complete mess of a hole. Once you've learnt the basics though a reasonable total (under 90) should be possible.



The course at the top of the screen with the icon menu below

After viewing each hole the player has woods, 3, 5, 7 and 9 irons, wedge and putter. Common sense will mostly tell you what club to use at first but finding out the particular distance achieved by each from different lies is a matter of practice.

The shot direction indicator has to be set next in the bottom left of the box and can to make a number of important decisions about the shot he's going to play. In the top left of the icon box is a club selector which gives you the choice of driver, 3 and 5 be anywhere in a 360 degree circle. When choosing this the wind direction and strength also needs to be taken into consideration as this will affect the flight of the ball. The last parameter to be set is the strength of the shot and again the best setting of this for a situation can only be discovered by trial and error.

Having set everything up you activate the golfball icon to play the shot. If the computer disagrees with your choice of club it will ask "Sure?" and you can change your selection if you want to. When the shot is actually played the golfer in the icon box will swing, the speed depending on the force of the shot, and hit the ball of the right hand edge of the screen.

The display now switches completely to an overhead view of the ball as it flies through the air, the map scrolling underneath it. It gets bigger as its height increases and then falls away again. The process now repeats until you get the ball into the hole and move onto the next one. The putting process is the same as for the other shots.

The course has the usual hazards of rough, bunkers, water, out of bounds, sea, road and pathways, all of which will produce a different result from a shot when hit.

It is certainly the best golf game I've seen and is very playable. The course graphics and the way the shots are played is very nice and it will present plenty of chalenge as you try to hit par. Golf is still something of a minority sport though in computer terms.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Instantly playable with handy icon system.**
- ▶ **Very nicely presented with lots of detail on the course.**
- ▶ **The shots are really played well with more action than previous games.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Golf still has limited appeal on a computer.**
- ▶ **You still can't get enough different direction angles for really accurate play.**

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

It's a golf game so it has a green screen anyway.

AW

GRAPHICS	62%
SONICS	17%
GRAB FACTOR	59%
STAYING POWER	69%
A A RATING	65%

ALIEN HIGHWAY

Vortex, £8.95 cass, £13.95 disc, joystick or keys

Subtitled *Encounter 2* this is the follow up to the immensely succesful *Highway Encounter* and is once again set on a roadway where you have to battle alien forces. The general format is the same as before but many important changes and new features have been made to maintain originality and make this a knockout game.

Having beaten off the attack on Earth you are now attempting to destroy the alien citadel that lies at the end of 30 zones of roadway. The road runs from the bottom left of the screen to the top right and as before is packed with nasty hazards. These have to be negotiated in your dustbin lookalike Vorton while pushing along the Terratron that will destroy the alien city.

Along the route the Terratron has to be energized at seven regeneration stations,

SECOND OPINION

Vortex certainly have made a lot of changes for this Encounter *sequel, but they're not all improvements. I particularly miss the extra Vortons and the mappable terrain of the earlier game. Still, the gameplay is terrific and the aliens are better than ever – and that electrified road edge is just wicked!*

AW

otherwise it will not work when you reach the final zone. The Terratron can be pushed all over the roadway instead of keeping to the centre line like the Lasertron in *Encounter*. This gives you plenty of scope for movement but also makes control and progress up the highway much harder.

Fortunately the Terratron slides easily though. This means that even though it may look like you've got it stuck somewhere it can still be pushed diagonally on the side to move it. You'll need that skill quite a lot because you're guaranteed to get into a lot of tight spots.

There's only one Vorton to push the Terratron because the "lives" system of the previous game has been done away with in favour of an energy gauge. This is depleted by contact with many items but replenished when the Terratron hits a regeneration station. When it reaches zero the game ends. The end can also be brought about by exhausting the game time limit, although this is a bit more generous than on *Encounter*.

There are lots of enemies, including some nasty surprises for even the best of *Encounter* players. The most noticeable is that the edge of the road has been electrified and rapidly drains your energy when run into, making positioning much tougher. There is another static hazards that drains energy fast – flamepoints. Both these features have to be avoided at all costs or your game won't last long.

The moving hazards are less deadly individually but wage a dangerous war of attrition. They have some nasty characteristics like homing in, ducking, attacking when your back is turned or your laser's empty and trapping the Vorton in some

AA RAVE AA

lethal spots. Some can be shot with your front mounted laser, others will have to be blocked or scooted past.

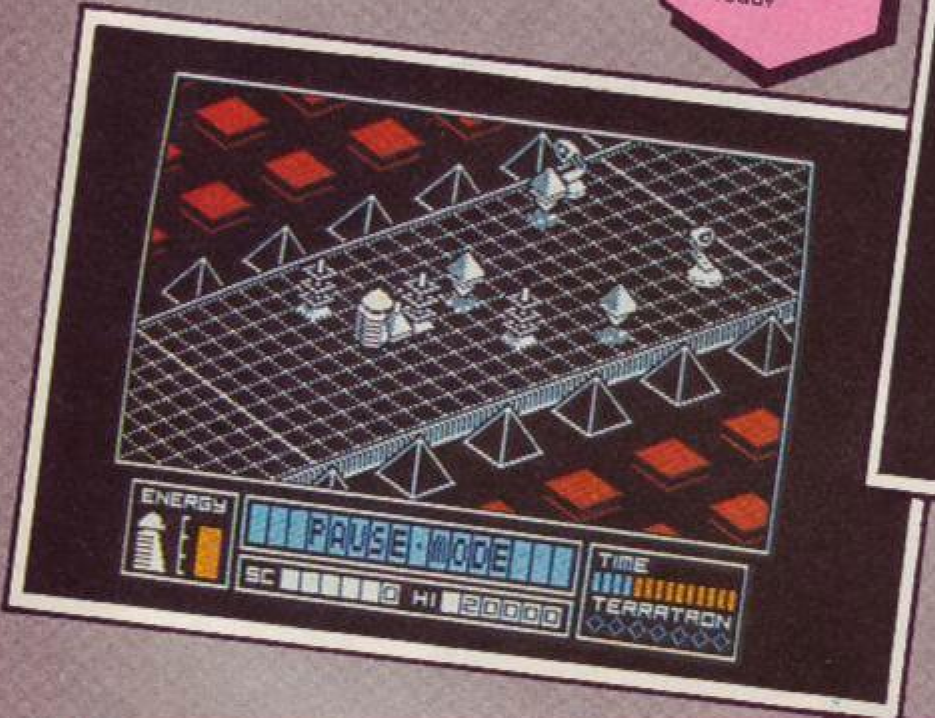
There are barrels similar to the ones in *Encounter* that can be moved around as blocks but these appear randomly so that there won't always be one when you need it. The screens also appear in a random layout with each new game, although there are groups of screens that stay together and the tough ones will bunch towards the end of the road.

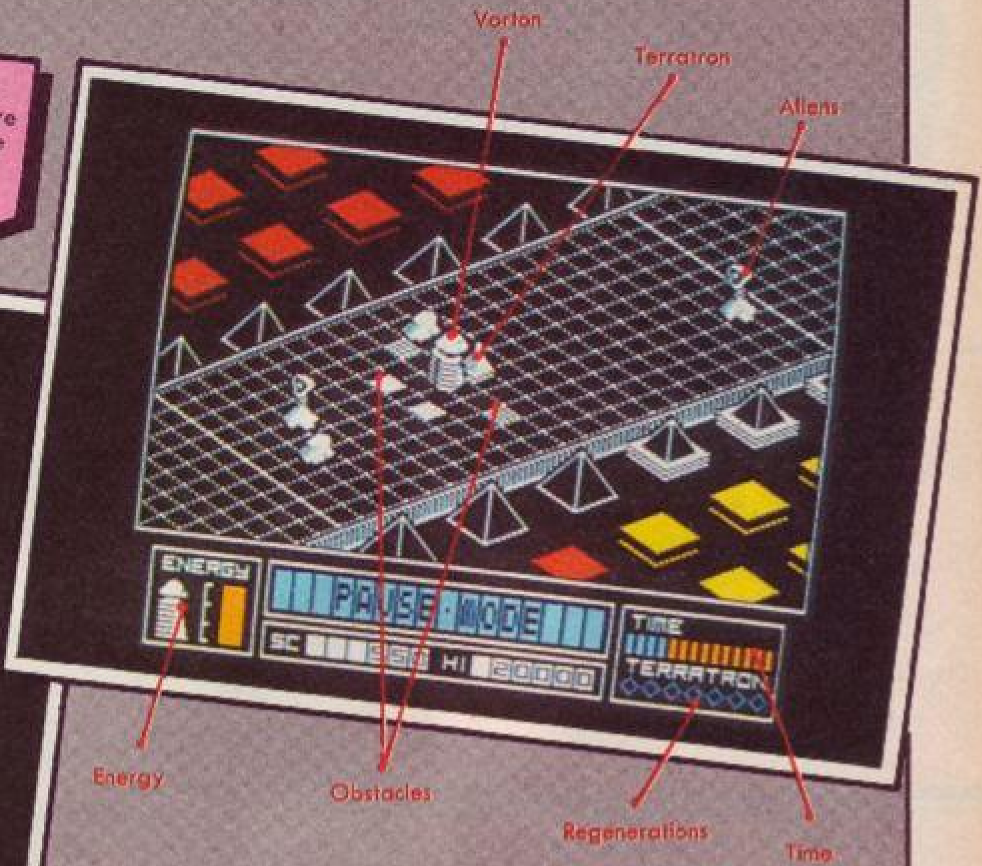
The animation is great on many of the features and once again there's a nice end game sequence, although it's not quite as impressive as the *Encounter* one. The aliens are wonderful when they move with craning necks and ducking action. The Terratron also gets in on the act when it is regenerated because what looks like a hand pops out of it to pull its lid down.

The control is a little finicky at first but like *Encounter* it becomes maddeningly addictive after just one game. The aliens and obstacles are even better than before – more deadly too. The random features make the game less predictable – you never know what to expect – and even *Encounter* players will find this a tough new challenge while the newcomer will undoubtedly marvel at the sheer genius of the game.

BW

The highway has become even more dangerous – dare you go back on the road?





Alien line up

KAMIKAZE ALIEN. Homes straight in at high speed. Explodes on contact but can be shot.



KAMIKAZE ALIEN. Homes straight in at high speed. Explodes on contact but can be shot.



ANGLEPOISE ZEB. Moves around rapidly and will hit you from behind given half a chance. Explodes on contact. Can be shot.



DUCKING ZEB. Hides from Vorton's gaze and even ducks to avoid laser fire. Cowardly in the face of fire but pounces fast if you aren't ready for it. Explodes on contact. Can be shot.



BOUNCING ELIPSE. Will bounce between two points. Does not explode on contact but causes energy drain anyway. Cannot be shot.



FLAME POINT. Static but rapidly drains energy when bumped into. Cannot be shot.



GREEN SCREEN VIEW

The game's practically black & white anyway, so you're not missing much.

AW

G O O D   N E W S

- **30 new zones.**
- **Fantstic graphics and animation.**
- **New features like electrified road edge that make new gameplay.**
- **Evil new aliens which duck and home in.**
- **Maddeningly addictive – you've just got to see the end.**

B A D   N E W S

- **Has many similarities to its predecessor.**
- **Newcomers may take some time to learn the ropes.**

GRAPHICS	92%
SONICS	32%
GRAB FACTOR	91%
STAYING POWER	87%
A A RATING	89%

ZOIDS

Martech, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

AA RAVE

You wouldn't expect much from a licensing deal to produce a game based around a bunch of toys that resemble dinosaurs. Happily, however, it has produced a game of surprising depth and difficulty that will appeal more to a games player looking for a tough challenge than to the younger age range who play with the toys themselves.

The game takes place on a planet controlled by red Zoids where your task as the only humanoid on the planet is to put together Zoidzilla, leader of the blue Zoids, and defeat the red Zoid leader, Redhorn the Terrible. The six pieces of Zoidzilla are hidden under city domes. Eight domes, a power plant, mine and beacon make up a city network and there are ten of these on the game map. Only six networks will contain a piece of Zoidzilla so you'll have to do a lot of searching and destroying to find them.

You begin as a Spiderzoid at one of several possible locations on the game map. You will be in a valley between the impassable mountain ranges that also surround most cities. The mountains, city features, Zoids and yourself are marked on the map but only a small area of this can be viewed at a time. This will appear in the centre of the display for most of the time, although this has several different uses at different times.

Around the central display are an icon menu, information window and a Zoidthought window. The two windows will give you information on your Zoid's weaponry, defences, power and how he feels about the current situation (ie whether he feels threatened or not). The icon menu is how he is controlled.There are eight icons: Zoid ID, scanner, status, guns, missiles, radio, information and move.

The Zoid ID will allow you to identify Zoids on the map so that you know who you're getting into a scrap with. The information icon provides a similar service in identifying any other features on the map. The move option allows you to shift the Zoid around in open areas but not through anyterrain features. Status gives you a readout on the power pods, missiles, guns, damage and pieces of Zoidzilla you have.

The scanner is used for locating power pods and parts of Zoidzilla that may appear when a city dome is destroyed. The guns, missiles and radio base are what you'll use most in the hectic battle. Guns are used to counter enemy missile strikes while missiles are your own attack method.

The guns are used on a 3D display of incoming missiles that have to be shot or they will damage the Zoid and eventually destroy it. Missiles have to be targetted and then guided through a very tricky mountain

SECOND OPINION

There's so much frustration early on in this game, you might well wonder if the game's actually playable. Well, playable it certainly is, but the frustration never really lets up. There is so little time between incoming strikes, it's easy to get ground down without ever having chance to fire back. Good, but tough.

AW

Red Zoid Roll of Death

There are six types of red Zoid – this rundown in ascending order of deadliness will give you an idea of what's in store for you.

HELLRUNNER: fast moving Zoids that patrol city zones. When city is attacked they quickly fetch Spinebacks into action. Easily replaced by city domes.

SLITHERZOID: carry raw material and power pods between mines, power plants and city domes. May leave these behind when destroyed but have good firepower and are replaceable by domes.

SPINEBACK: stand by inside domes until summoned by Hellruner into battle. Powerful, dangerous and replaceable.

SERPENTZOID: patrols around a city network looking for intruders whom he deals with using hefty firepower. Cannot be replaced if destroyed.

MAMMOTH THE DESTROYER: summoned by distress calls from city beacons. Very powerful – don't mess with mammoth.

REDHORN THE TERRIBLE: aptly named because he's the meanest of the bunch. Responds to beacon calls and has devastating firepower. Only Zoidzilla will stand a chance against him.



range to their destination in another 3D display. The radio is used to call up a separate missile strike and combining these two functions is how you destroy cities.

The power plant in each network provides the deflector shield for each city dome so if you radio for a missile strike on it it temporarily diverts power to itself giving about 30 seconds in which to hit a city with your own missiles. The mine and beacon are also important targets since the former provides materials for more red Zoids and the latter alerts the two most powerful red Zoids to your presence and they head straight for you.

There are six types of each Zoid with different strengths. This will affect how much damage a missile attack will do to you, the behaviour of the Zoid and whether it is replaceable. Your own Zoid will become more powerful as parts of Zoidzilla are collected, giving you more fire power or armour.

At first things are extremely difficult and frustrating with interminable enemy missile strikes and difficulty in guiding your own missiles. However, perseverance will teach you all the tricks and reveal a very absorbing game that will provide a lasting challenge and plenty of action. The graphics are colourful icons and effective vectors for the action while the worst bit of the game is the sound – you'll turn it off after only a couple of minutes. *Zoids* may take work to get into but its worth every bit of effort.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Vital screens are blue on black, making them effectively unplayable. Buy something else – a modulator, perhaps.

AW

GOOD NEWS

- **Nice icon control and screen windows.**
- **A very tough game to beat.**
- **Requires both strategic and arcade skills.**
- **Good graphics for all sections.**
- **Certainly not just for kids.**

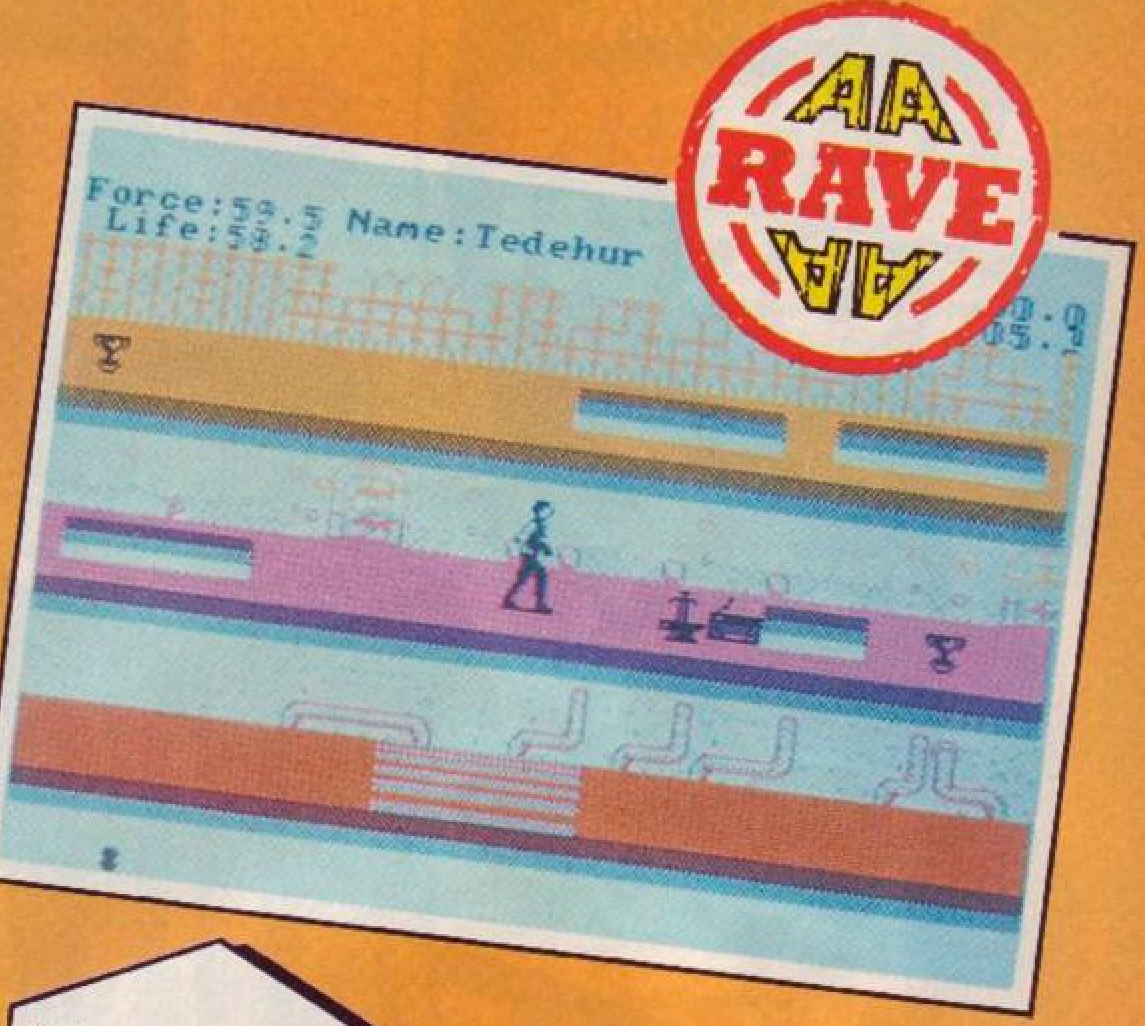
BAD NEWS

- **Enemy missile strikes and missile crashes into mountains can be annoyingly repetitive.**
- **Takes a long while to really get going in the game.**

GRAPHICS	86%
SONICS	27%
GRAB FACTOR	84%
STAYING POWER	93%
A A RATING	88%

THE FIFTH AXIS

Activision/Loriciels, £9.99cass, joystick or keys



If only you could see this guy move

The fifth axis supposedly governs the probability of events happening within the universe, but don't let that worry you because the heavy background information that comes with the game isn't essential to the action. The game itself is surprisingly easy to get playing but has plenty of difficulty to keep you going.

Once you've had fun trying to work out what on earth the instructions are about you can get started with the game and be delighted by its simplicity and animation. The main character you control is wonderfully animated and can walk, run and jump in a tremendous style which would even do justice to the long awaited and much postponed *Impossible Mission.* His task, put simply, is to retrieve artefacts from a multilevel, wraparound building and then retrive "anachronons" from various time zones.

The building in which the mission starts is a laboratory full of dangerous cyborgs and holes in the floor. The cyborgs will attack you and have to be fought while the holes in the floor restrict your movement. Lying around the building are artefacts and geometric keys which you need to pick up. The artefacts will add to your score until enough have been collected to visit a time zone.

The holes in the floor can be negotiated by jumping or using the keys to levitate across them. Lifts will also take you up a floor. The cyborgs that patrol the lab come in many weird varieties but are all marvellously drawn. They can be fought using kicks and punches until they explode, accompanied by one of the funniest sound effects we've heard. Some float while others can be shoved down holes in the floor to their death.

Falls and fights can also be hazardous to your health though. There are three strength gauges for life, agility and force.

GRAPHICS	88%
SONICS	82%
GRAB FACTOR	84%
STAYING POWER	83%
A A RATING	83%

Life is diminished by robot hits and long falls, agility determines how easily you get around and force diminshes with every blow in a fight. If the life gauge reaches zero then the game ends.

The time zones are where the anachronons are recovered and consist of a single scrolling level where you face many hazards. The first zone merely has spears being thrown at you that have to be blocked or avoided but later zones get harder. There are greater numbers of weapons thrown at you, obstacles on the ground and even missiles from the air. The anachronon has to be reached within a time limit which decreases every time the man gets hit by something.

The character animation is excellent with good fight action, although the back-


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SECOND OPINION

Superb animation, great action and silly sound effects are all very well, but where's the lasting interest? Once you've mangled a few cyborgs and dashed through a few time zones, you've seen pretty much all the game has to offer. There's still plenty to do, of course, but it tends to be just more of the same.

AW

grounds are a little weak. The music and sound effects are also of high quality, particularly the death screams of cyborg and human alike. The gameplay is all action with little strategy involved but the time zones get very difficult and present a lot of challenge.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Some of the cyborgs are a bit hard to see, but it's generally okay.

AW

GOOD NEWS

- **Terrific animation.**
- **Great music and sound effects.**
- **All action gameplay with jumping, fighting and running.**
- **Difficult time zones that present a lasting challenge.**

BAD NEWS

- **Gameplay in lab may become repetitive.**

INTO OBLIVION

Mastertronic, £1.99 cass, joystick or keys

Remember the names *Human Harvest* and *Graceful Degradation*? They were both provisional titles for this, the latest blockbuster from Stephen Curtis. It picks up where his last game left off but in a totally different type of game made up of a massive number of screens.

The all powerful computer from the first two games in the series (*Nonterraqueous* and *Soul of a Robot*) has been destroyed leaving a galaxy of 42 planets that is infested with killer droids intent on destroying all intruders. The 42 planets combine to make a total of about 2,500 screens of action, which should be enough to be going along with. The aim is to find the one safe planet away from the rest of the dangers and this is no easy task.

You control a little chap in a Mk II Seeker that can fly and blast away aliens with a laser. When he's on the ground he trundles around on a little wheel but flaps a couple of wings when he's up in the air. On every screen you encounter there are the alien droids that appear in groups of three. They follow different movement patterns around the screen, sometimes exploding when they hit the edge of the screen. They can be shot or avoided but will keep coming back as soon as all three are destroyed.

At first it may seem that the aliens pose little threat and are easy to avoid but with such a large task ahead of you the gradual attrition caused by collisions with them becomes a major factor. Periods of immunity to them can be gained by picking up the right object, which changes the border colour of the screen.

On many screens there are flying saucers which you can activate so that they rise up the screen and takes you to another planet. Sometimes there will be two saucers or one that cannot be used until a barrier above it is released. To remove these barriers another object has to be found and picked up.

The Seeker can also move off the sides of screens along a planet surface but the way will often be blocked by no-entry signs or by a "corrosive atmosphere" that costs you a life. Another mode of transport is the system of transporter screens, but again you have to find out how to operate them.

While searching for the safe planet you need to collect over 90 units of psyche which appear and can be picked up in the same way as other objects. Some screens have direction arrows at the top and these can give an "as the crow flies" indicator of where the safe planet is. Also in this top section of the screen are the detailed planet backgrounds that change as you hop from place to place.

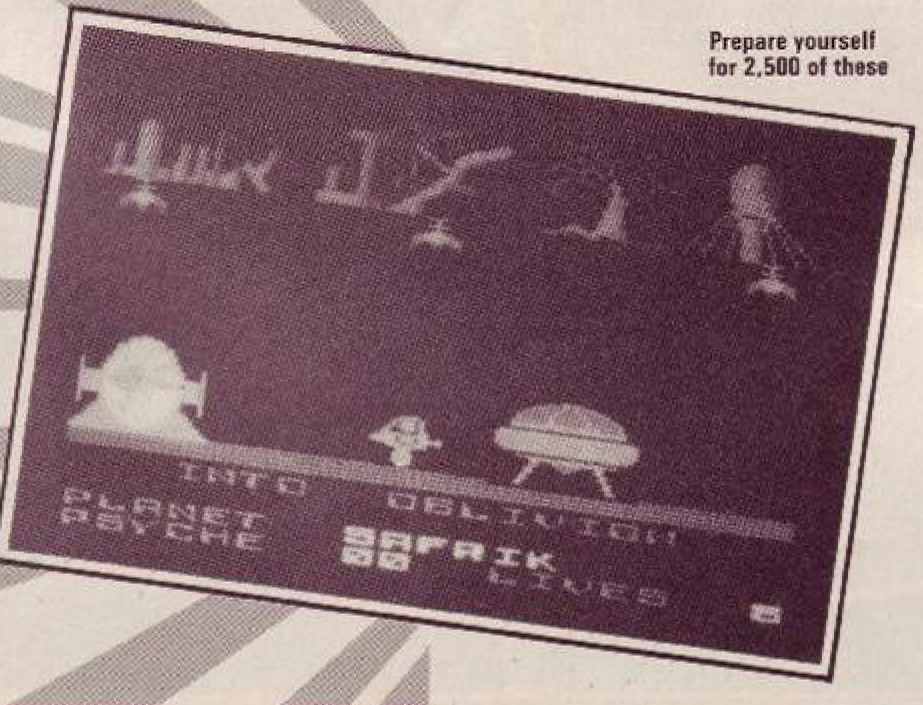
The most impressive thing about the game is its size and the need to explore. This will keep you going for a long while, trying to find the safe planet and overcoming all the obstacles. It's also a game that will require mapping in order to get through it. The one drawback is that while all this exploring and mapping is going on there isn't much to get you really excited – it's certainly challenging but probably won't take you to any great heights of addiction.

BW

SECOND OPINION

There really are an awful lot of screens, but there really isn't anything to do on any of them. The obstacles are boring, the nasties are lifeless and the controls are pretty dull too. If you want something big and difficult to map, it's certainly good value. If you want gameplay, on the other hand, it just hasn't got any.

AW



Prepare yourself for 2,500 of these

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Doesn't lose too much on the graphics side, but then it didn't have verymuch to start with.

AW

GOOD NEWS

- **2,500 screens.**
- **A tough long term task.**
- **Lots of exploring and mapping to do.**
- **A lot of screens for a little money.**

BAD NEWS

- **Not much variance in the screens.**
- **Not enough fast action to get you really hooked.**
- **Graphics aren't as attractive or stylish as in the two previous titles.**

GRAPHICS	60%
SONICS	41%
GRAB FACTOR	50%
STAYING POWER	72%
A A RATING	70%

EVIEW * **TEMPEST** PREVIEW * PREVIEW *

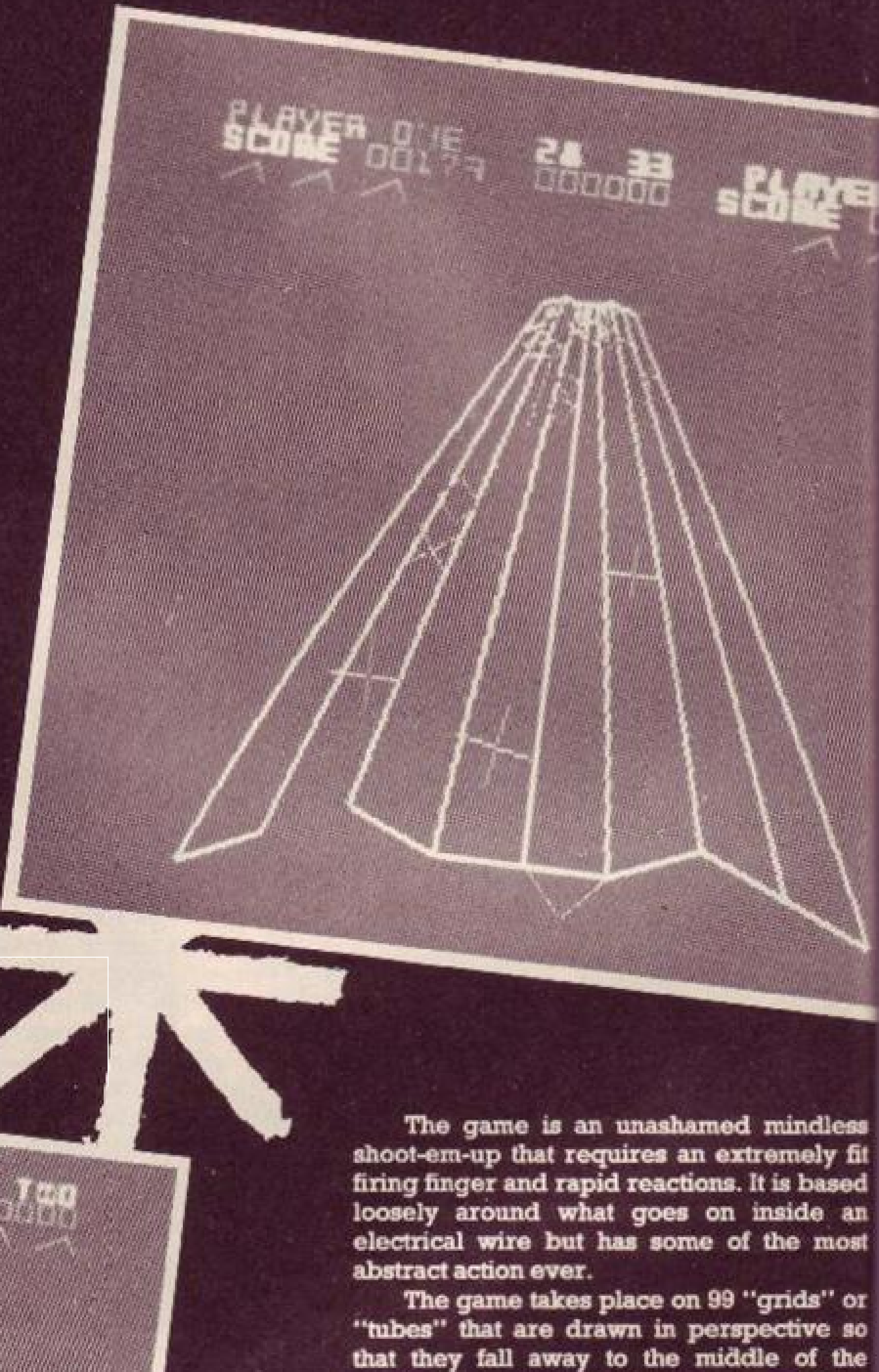
TEMPEST

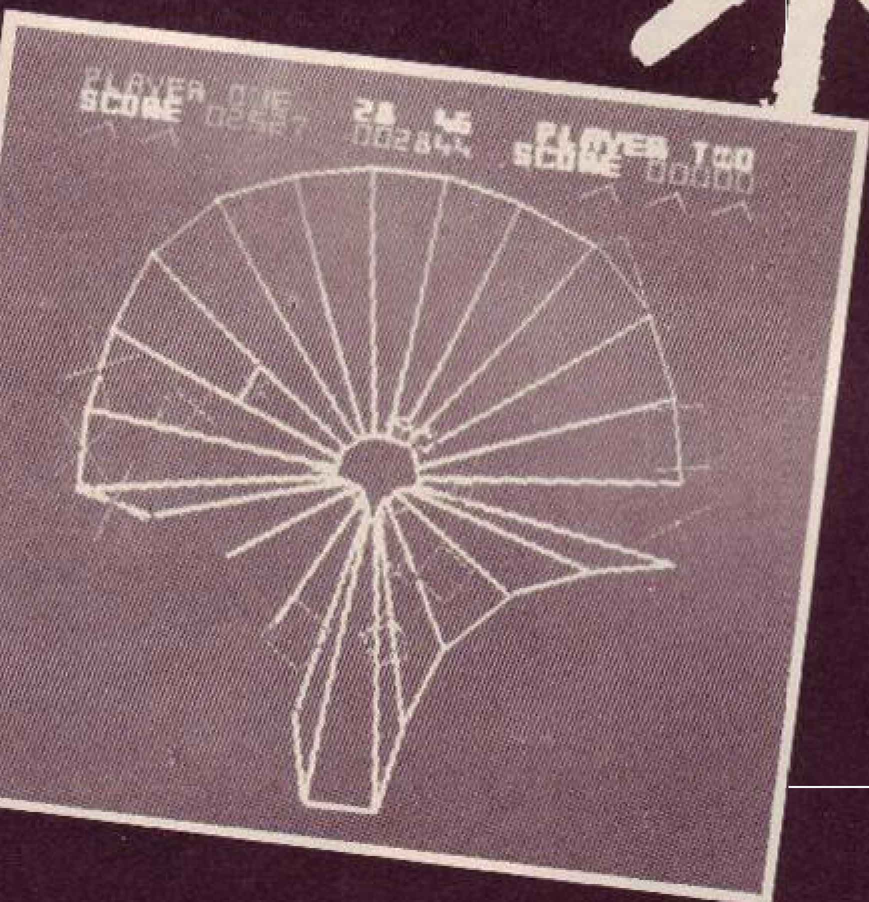
Bob Wade gets a pre-release look at an arcade classic on its way from Electric Dreams

No it isn't a game based around Shakespeare's play but to misquote one of his lines "this is the stuff dreams are made of." *Tempest* first appeared as an arcade game using vector (straight line) graphics and although it was never a big commercial success it built up a large cult following.

I'm one of that cult – in fact it is my favourite arcade game of all time, and so you can understand the excitement when we got our first peek at the game. It has never been succesfully converted to a home machine despite being around for several years but now the Amstrad is going to get the first version and it looks like being well worth the wait.

The conversion is due to be released in June by Electric Dreams, producers of the superb *Spin Dizzy* and judging from the version I saw, they've done a pretty good job. The vector-graphics are well represented, if a bit less colourful than the original. And music has been added to the repertoire of sound effects. The action is as addictive as ever.





The game is an unashamed mindless shoot-em-up that requires an extremely fit firing finger and rapid reactions. It is based loosely around what goes on inside an electrical wire but has some of the most abstract action ever.

The game takes place on 99 "grids" or "tubes" that are drawn in perspective so that they fall away to the middle of the screen. The grid is split into columns and a "spark" revolves around the top of these under your control. From the bottom of the columns come various adversaries that have to be shot by the rapid firing spark before they can get to it and destroy it.

That is basically what the game is about but the beauty of the action is in the variety of the electrical dangers you face and the addictiveness and difficulty of the furious action. You won't learn a lot from this game but you'll get so engrossed in the action that hours will slip by unnoticed as you battle the ever increasing difficulty of the tubes.



Most of the features are true to the arcade version although at the time of writing there are still some to be altered and bugs to be eliminated. Just to whet your appetite here are some of the dangers that venture onto the tubes. FLIPPERS flip across from lane to lane, FUSEBALLS rise quickly up a single lane, TANKERS rise up a lane and split into two flippers or a spiralling fuseball when shot, SPIRALLING FUSEBALLS circle the grid at hish speed, SPIKES are lines that rise up a lane and PULSARS short circuit lanes making travel across them impossible.

Keep your eyes peeled for a full review because fast action fans really shouldn't miss this one.

MONTY ON THE RUN

Gremlin Graphics, £8.95 cass, £12.95 disc, joystick or keys

Monty is a mole and a naughty mole at that because he's just escaped from prison. His task is to make it to freedom through 49 platform screens using a kit comprised of five objects. Aside from negotiating the hazardous platforms the kit is his main problem because he doesn't know which five objects he needs.

As platform games go this is quite a tough one because it doesn't just demand good timing and accurate jumping but some exploration skills as well to find the right route. The screens of platforms and hazards connect up in several different ways and there are even red herrings thrown in to trap you. Most can be reached by walking off the edge of one screen onto another but some have to be jumped up to or fallen into.

SECOND OPINION

Cute graphics and great music don't make up for desperately tired gameplay. For size, complexity and playability it's distinctly inferior to Jet Set Willy, *and JSW is old. I really liked Monty's jumping action, but the game belongs in a museum.*

AW

The platforms come in several varieties but are mostly reliable and don't spring surprises on you in the form of conveyor belts or disappearing floors. However there are some dangerous things that can cause Monty's downfall so that the rule "if it moves avoid it" should be adhered to.

Monty gets over gaps in the floor, level changes and obstacles by jumping. This he performs in acrobatic style, somersaulting rather nicely in mid air, which isn't easy for a tubby little mole. Fortunately he can also get away with mistakes while doing this because he can fall any distance without coming to harm as long as he doesn't run into any nasties.

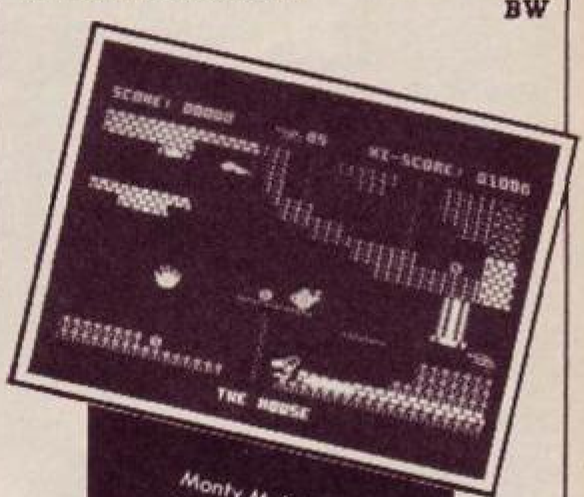
The nasties are the usual silly things that crop up in platform games. They follow planned routes either horizontally or vertically and have to be avoided by careful timing and quick reactions. Collision with one of them loses Monty one of his five lives. Another nasty feature are the crushers that, if they catch Monty, cause him to explode in four directions in lovely style.

Progress through the game is mostly achieved by trial and error in many repeated games. As you explore, gold coins and other objects are found. The coins just boost the score while other objects may have good or bad effects on the hapless mole.

One of the major features of the game is the music that plays continuously throughout the action and the various title screens. There are different tunes for each section and all are very well done indeed and will get your feet tapping.

The gameplay isn't very original despite the introduction of the freedom kit but fans of platform games should enjoy it. The graphics too aren't that wonderful but have nice touches like the somersaulting and crushers. The music is the game's real hallmark, the problem is trying to sit still while you're playing it.

BW



Monty Mole leaps and jumps in search of freedom



GREEN SCREEN VIEW

The water is almost invisible, but that's all part of the fun. In fact, it's all of the fun.

AW

GOOD NEWS

- **Lots of excellent music.**
- **49 difficult-to-conquer screens.**
- **Freedom kit adds a new element.**

BAD NEWS

- **Distinctly unoriginal in concept.**
- **Gameplay is based on trial and error.**

GRAPHICS	53%
SONICS	91%
GRAB FACTOR	60%
STAYING POWER	68%
A A RATING	65%



AA RAVE

10 COMPUTER HITS: 2

Beau-Jolly, £9.95 cass, £14.95 disc (disc release date uncertain)

Compilations have been selling exceedingly well and it's no wonder because they represent such excellent value for money. This is the second such offering from Beau-Jolly and although all the games are quite old now it is probably even better value than the first compilation. We've given a single overall rating for each game that probably differs from their original ones in past issues. That's because there's been a lot of improvement in Amstrad games that tends to downgrade the older titles.

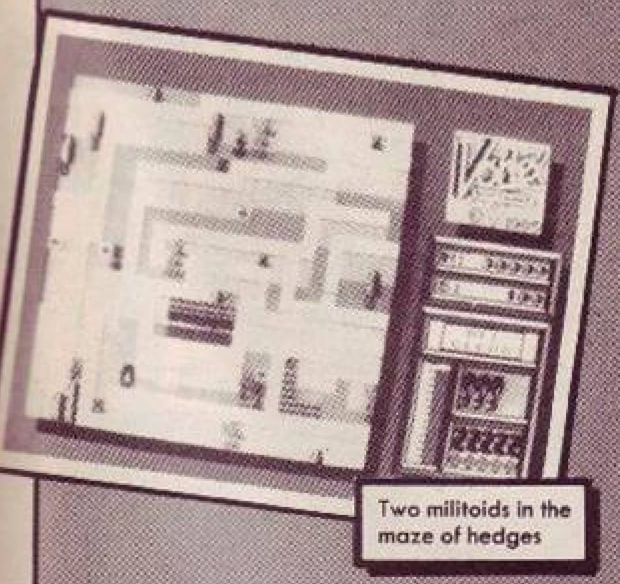
Codename Mat – 52%
An early succesful shoot-em-up that is definitely showing its age now. The graphics and sound are primitive by today's standards but even so there is still some depth to the action. Not as good as more recent space games but does have some nostalgia value.

Moon Buggy – 63%

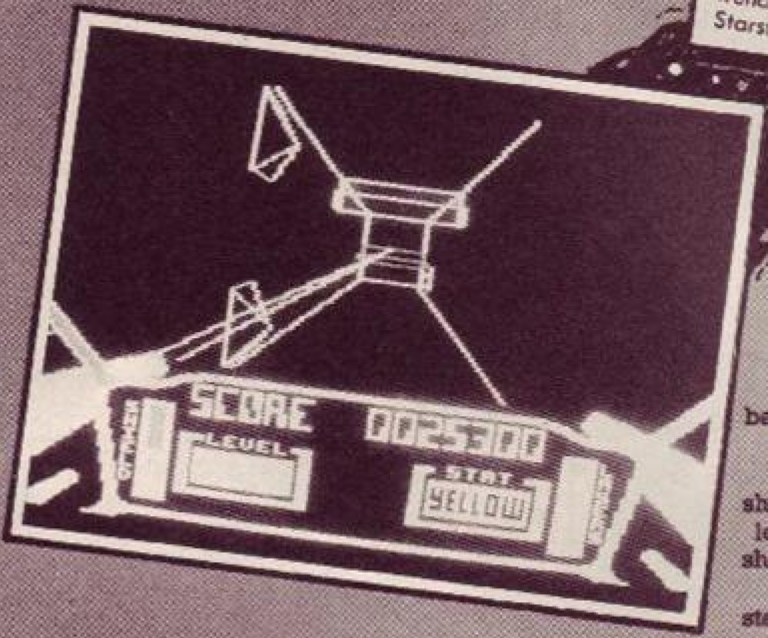
A rather underrated version of the arcade game *Moon Patrol* that places you in a buggy trundling across a lunar landscape. You have to jump potholes, blast rocks, destroy spaceships and avoid animals in your path to get through three dangerous zones. Nice scrolling backgrounds and a testing arcade challenge.

World Cup – 52%
This football simulation is in the same mould as *Match Day* but not quite as classy in its execution. It has a scrolling pitch with a goal at either end. One to eight players can play in a world cup tournament but a single player will find life very tough against the computer. The gameplay is rather limited though without much variety.

Gauntlet – 73%
An excellent version of the arcade game *Defender* with lots of fast action as your spaceship flies low across the surface of a planet. You have to protect scientists on the ground from marauding aliens. They attack in waves and come in several varieties that just get tougher and tougher. A really good blast.



Two militoids in the maze of hedges



Flying through a trench in 3D Starstrike

Fantasia Diamond – 74%
The only adventure on the compilation but a worthy one at that. It featured in the Pilgrim's top eight back in issue one and still looks pretty good today. It's got nice pictures and some uncommonly intelligent characters – the Pilgrim was particularly taken by a toy robot who seems to have a mind of its own.

Super Pipeline II – 67%

16 pipelines have to be kept in good repair while they fill up barrels with water. You control Foreman Fred who, with the help of two workmates, has to stop tools knocking holes in the pipes and other nasty creatures from knocking him off them.

The game features some excellent graphics and sound but can be mastered fairly easily.

Technician Ted – 65%
An arcade adventure in the *Jet Set Willy* mould but with more complicated tasks to complete. Ted has to complete 21 tasks in a single working day without running out of energy. Each task consists of hitting two boxes in a room, but in a particular order.

The graphics and sound are fair, very *JSW*-ish, and the gameplay is really quite addictive. Not as complex as more recent arcade adventures but still a good game.

Android 2 – 70%
This arcade game relies on fast action and a tough task to get you really addicted and again it has stood up well to the test of time. It features an android in a maze of hedges infested with hoverdroids, bouncers and your prey the militoids. There are five of these nasty insects that have to be shot three times in the head to kill them off. Some very stylish graphics but you may find control touchy and the scrolling annoying.

3D Starstrike – 81%
This is quite an old shoot-em-up but still shows plenty of class today. It is a four stage battle to destroy enemy bases in hollowed-out moons.

The first stage is a space battle against many enemy ships and is followed by a pass low across the moon's surface shooting towers.

The third and fourth stages are in a trench where you have to avoid catwalks and blast gun emplacements before attacking the reactor pods that will destroy the moon. There's plenty of fast and colourful action that still makes this an excellent addition to anyone's collection.

Mutant Monty – 45%
You might call this a platform game without gravity. It has the familiar task of collecting objects on a screen before being able to move to the next. Control is quite difficult and the 40 screens will be tough to complete.

SECOND OPINION

They may be old, but look at that price! Besides, who cares what age the games are, when you've got the likes of Gauntlet and Android 2? If half these games are worth Mastertronic prices – and they are – then the odd duff one doesn't matter anyway. Go for it!

AW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

On all ten? You've got to be joking!

AW

GOOD NEWS

- **10 games for just over the price of one.**
- **A good range of titles and game types – something to suit everyone.**
- **Many excellent titles that still look good today.**
- **Great package for the new Amstrad owner.**

BAD NEWS

- **Tape loading can take time.**

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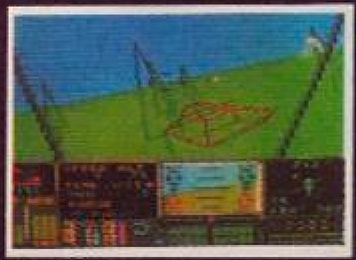
BY D.K. MARSHALL
ADAPTED BY DARRELL D.

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MASTERGAME

BOUNDER

Gremlin Graphics, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Gremlin are really into cute characters and weird gameplay these days. This latest idea is weirder than most but immensely playable and addictive. The bounder in question isn't a badly behaved cad but a tennis ball doing what it does best – bouncing.

You'd need a pretty warped imagination to cope with a scenario for the game but basically it involves keeping the ball bouncing along a vertically scrolling course for as long as possible. Along the way you need to pick up as many points as possible and there are plenty of ways of doing it.

The scrolling course is split into 10 levels with a bonus screen in between each one. On each level there are a massive number of obstacles that have to be negotiated by the ball before it can reach the goal at the end ofthe level. When the goal is reached a bonus screen is played in which masses of points can be accumulated.

Bounder beasties

There are some funny old aliens within the game that will cost plenty of lives so here's what you should watch out for.

BINOCULOIDS: rolling pairs of binoculars. Follow patterns but very tough to avoid.
STICKITS: spinning sticks that home in on you.
MOSCITA BIRDS: green, flapping fowl that also home in on you from the top of the screen.
EXOCETS: darts that can come across the screen at the most inconvenient moment to puncture your ball.
There are lots of others as well including chomper domes, pterries and coins – life is tough when you're bouncing.

The ball begins at the bottom of level one and at the bottom of the screen, which then begins to scroll downwards at a constant speed. The ball has to be bounced along trying to keep pace with the scrolling since being at the very top or bottom of the screen can cause control problems. The ball bounces automatically but you control its movement through the air and can perform some rather unusual manoeuvres like turning at right angles.

At first the control will cause problems and you'll find lives slipping away very quickly. However the action is so addictive that you'll keep coming back for more and gradually get the hang of the control. Even once you've mastered ball control new sections of the game will always throw surprises that can result in rapid disaster.

The scrolling course is composed of various sorts of scenery most of which aren't safe to go on. The only thing you can bounce on are floor plates decorated with a hexagonal design and some other special squares which perform particular functions. Other areas of land will either let the ball drop into them or prevent it going over. Mountains and walls have to be steered around while most other things have to be bounced over.

SECOND OPINION

If you thought Thing would be a hard act to follow, you're in for a surprise. This game may be cute, but you'll probably be too busy to notice. The gameplay is so absorbing, so fiendishly addictive that you just can't put the joystick down. If the frustration doesn't drive you up the wall, the twee little tune will.

AW

As if all that weren't enough there are also some nasty breeds of alien that will move in patterns on the hexagons or actually home in on the ball. These can't be shot or destroyed but with extremely good timing they can be bounced over. The best advice is to find out where they appear and avoid them.

The ten levels are of varying size but combine to make a playing length of over 150 screens. Right from the start you'll know you've got a tough task on your hands with things getting really hot on levels two and three. After that there's just no let up.

There are a number of special squares. The first ones you'll encounter are mystery bonuses and extra-power jumps. The bonuses are squares with question marks on them which can give extra points, jumps, balls or something altogether less pleasant. What each one does has to be learnt through trial and error but it stays the same in all subsequent games. The extra-powered jumps are achieved off squares with arrows on them and keep the tennis ball in the air for twice the normal length of time.

At the end of a level there will be a bonus screen if you have any bonus jumps left. These jumps are only used on these screens made up of many squares bearing question marks that will give you large bonuses. The ball has to hit as many as possible, an extra bonus being given for the number of jumps left. Jumps need to be conserved carefully since they will be needed on later bonus screens.

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Very playable, although some of your opponents use the lack of colour to sneak up on you.

AW

Despite its difficulty the game is incredibly addictive and however many lives you lose you're guaranteed to come back for more. The scrolling is well done, although not perfect, and the graphics are superbly drawn and very colourful. The music that plays throughout the game is also pleasant and adds to the enjoyment of the action. Doesn't have the depth and strategy of some games but it has a wealth of originality, addictiveness and great action.

BW

GOOD NEWS

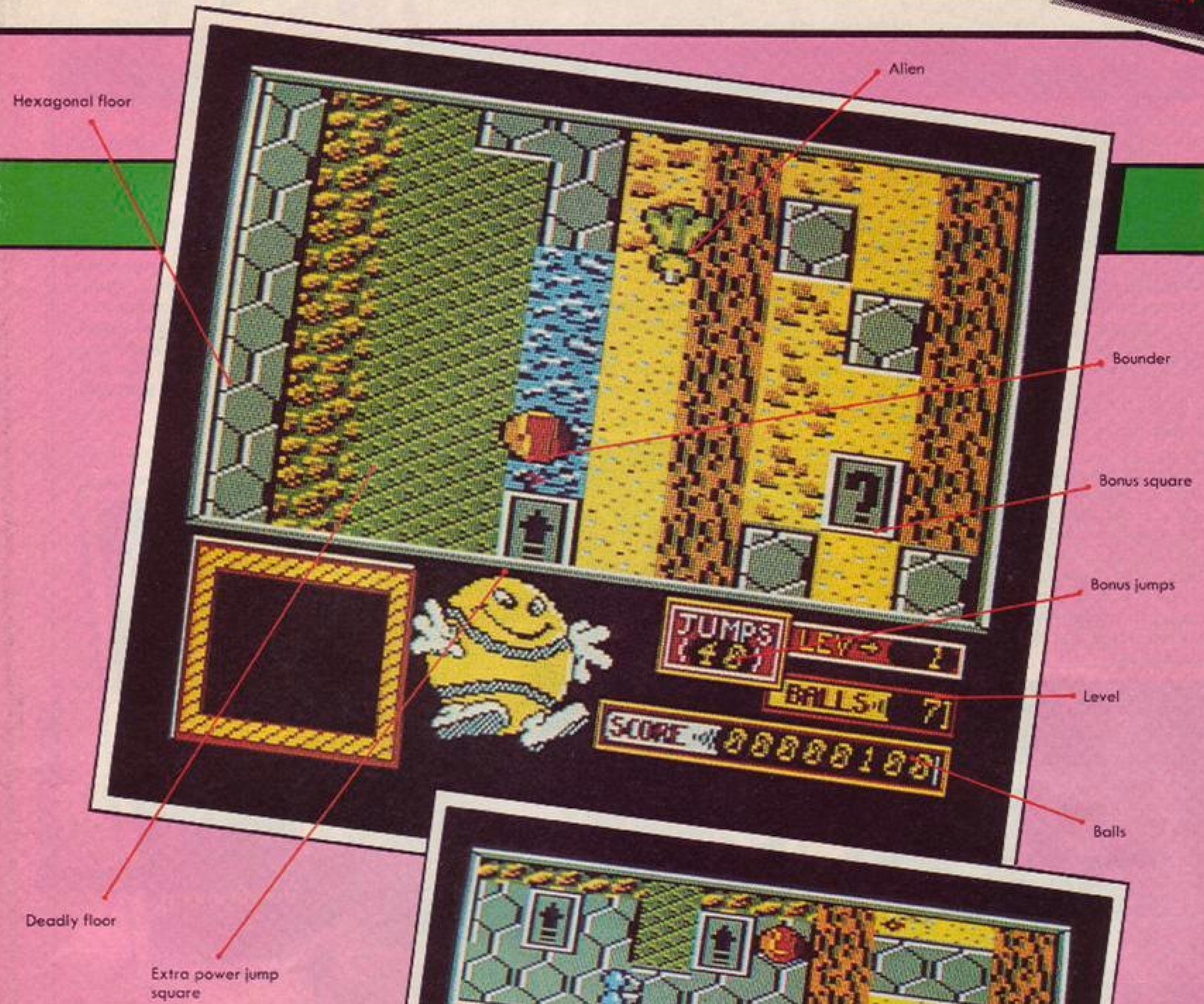
- **10 levels, 174 screens.**
- **Good scrolling of some excellent graphics.**
- **Great control system when you're used to it.**
- **Devilishly difficult from the start.**
- **Good accompanying music.**
- **Packed with originality.**

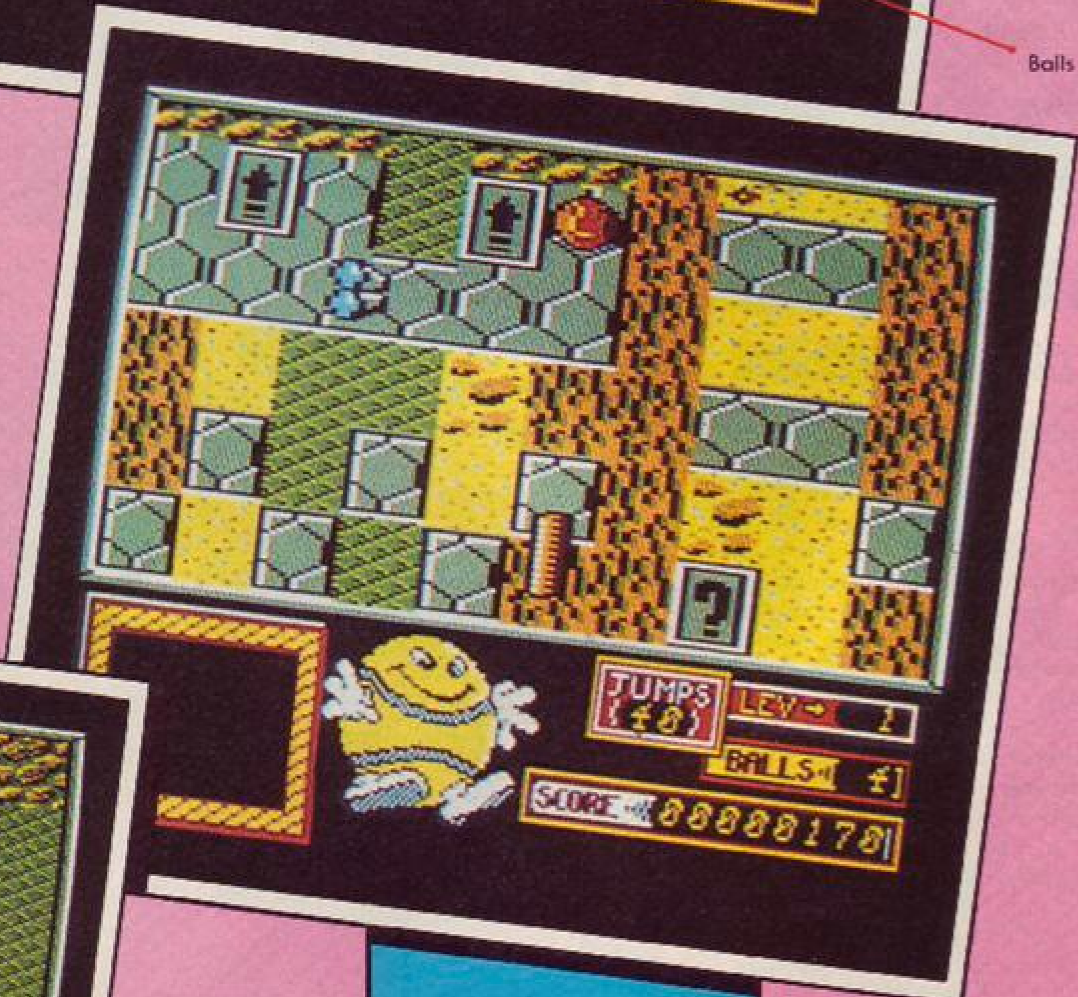
BAD NEWS

- **Not for those with a bent for strategy or puzzles.**
- **A trifle too difficult to start with?**

GRAPHICS	93%
SONICS	77%
GRAB FACTOR	93%
STAYING POWER	92%
A A RATING	92%







Boing, boing, boing, boing, boing, boing



Lots of colour and lots of action as you bounce around a weird landscape

TURBO ESPRIT

Durell, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

AA RAVE

Car racing games are nothing new but when you're plonked down in the middle of a maze of city streets with some drug smugglers to round up in quick time it becomes a whole new challenge. You won't only need to develop some new driving skills but you'll need a keen tactical mind as well.

You are driving a Lotus Turbo Esprit with a top speed of 150 mph and can choose from four different city layouts in which the action can take place. Each city has one, two and three-lane roads. There are also one way sections of road but if you're feeling brave or lucky you can drive the wrong way up a street and take your chances.

The aim of the game is to track down and either capture or destroy an armoured drug supply car and four drug delivery cars. The supply car will appear on the city map first. You can study the map, which is quite large, and track down the car from the grid reference it appeared at. This car will then try to rendezvous with each of the four delivery cars that will appear as the game continues.

SECOND OPINION

Combat Lynx on four wheels, as you might say. Ambitious graphics, unusual gameplay and a real long-term challenge stack up against jerky movement and clumsy view-switching once again. The driving side's certainly a lot more interesting than the average racing game, but the sameness and overall lack of staying power left me rather disappointed.

AW

If left to themselves they will exchange their supplies of drugs, the four delivery cars will go into their hideouts and the armoured car will then head out of the city. The job is to stop them and different points are awarded for stopping the cars at different stages. The delivery cars are worth most when they they have collected their drugs but not yet made it to the hideout. The armoured supply car is best stopped when it has made its four drops and is trying to get out of the city.

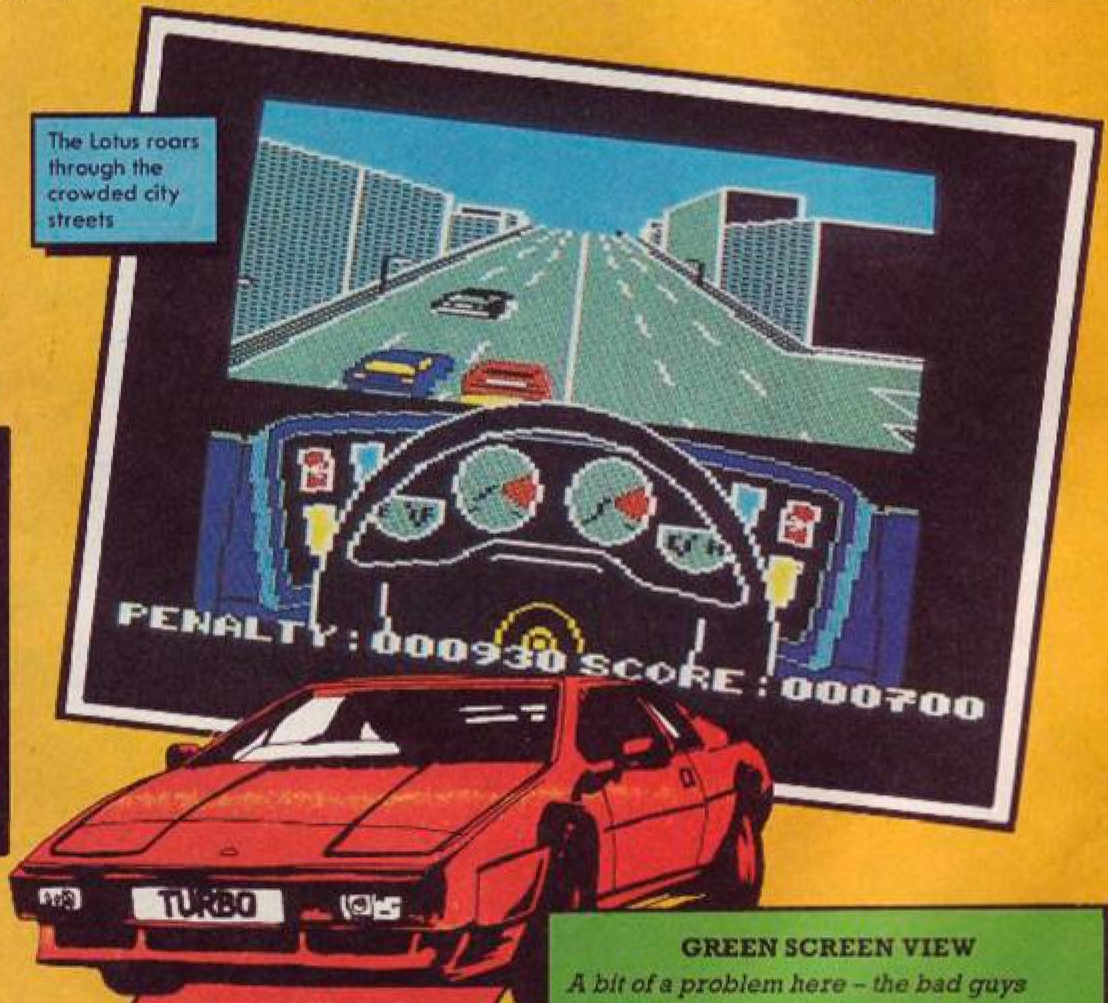
The delivery and supply cars are the only ones apart from yourself that appear on the map. However there are many other cars on the streets driven by innocent civilians. The bad guys are colour coded in black and red so that you'll always know who you're dealing with.

Your car is equipped with a forward firing machine gun and this can be used to blow up the delivery cars. More profitable, and essential for the armoured car, is bumping – you smash into the other car until it surrenders.

The streets where the action takes place are lined with buildings that scroll rather jerkily past you. However the effect while driving is good and you have to do plenty of concentrating on the road. All the junctions are at 90 degrees so that wonderful skid turns can be performed but you can also crash easily into walls, lamp-posts and other traffic.

Drug smuggler hit cars may occasionally pursue you and try to put one of your four cars out of action but any engine or radiator damage can be repaired at a garage. Fuel can also be replenished at garages and running out will mean you'll have to abandon that car.

You will actually see your red car on the bottom of the driving display and below it is a dashboard display showing fuel, indicators, engine temperature, rpm, speed and steering wheel. Controlling it is fairly easy to get the hang of and once grasped driving can be lots of fun and very hectic. There's lots of action here that will test you to the limit. **BW**



The Lotus roars through the crowded city streets

Penalty points

Unusually there are two high scores for the game, an ordinary one and one for penalties. The latter can be achieved in a number of ways – all of them BAD.

You can shoot and blow up innocent civilians' cars, being careful of course not to drive into the smouldering wreckage, which will bring you hefty penalties.

This will particularly suit anyone who hates being held up or cut up by them.

Pedestrians are also at risk as they walk along the roadside pavements as you can mount the kerb and crunch them. Otherwise you can wait till they venture onto a pedestrian crossing and let them have it there.

More penalties can be gained for bumping the other traffic, while shooting a red traffic light can be done just for fun but won't get you any penalties unless you can sideswipe someone going the other way. I can definitely see people going for penalty high scores and ignoring the smugglers.

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

A bit of a problem here – the bad guys driving black cars look almost identical to the innocent bystanders driving blue cars. Why do software houses do this?

AW

GOOD NEWS

- **Four large city layouts.**
- **Novel graphics.**
- **Good driving controls that are a lot of fun.**
- **Tough game task with a side aim for the evil amongst you.**

BAD NEWS

- **Slightly jerky movement.**
- **Perhaps not quite enough variety in the action.**

GRAPHICS	78%
SONICS	51%
GRAB FACTOR	83%
STAYING POWER	81%
A A RATING	81%

COUNTDOWN
Macsen, £8.95 cass, keys only

Yet another quiz game from Macsen who seem to have the rights to every silly game show on television. This one recreates the Channel 4 show where contestants are tested on their knowledge of words and numbers against the clock. Like their previous games *Blockbusters* and *Bullseye* it is mostly limited to being a two player game.

The quiz show consists of nine rounds of play, six based on anagrams, two on numbers and one on a word puzzle. The game can be played by two people competing against each other or by one person trying to get a high score. The computer acts as scorer and judge but can be overruled when it doesn't know a legal word.

The six rounds based on anagrams are the major part of the game where most points can be picked up. One of the players has to choose nine letters, each choice being between a vowel or a consonant but otherwise entirely random. The players are then given 30 seconds to think of the longest word that can be formed from the letters chosen.

SECOND OPINION

A vast improvement on Blockbusters *etc. but still pretty dull. Of all the things you can put on a computer, TV game shows have to be the weakest and least interesting.*

AW

At the end of 30 seconds the words have to be typed in and checked against the computer's dictionary. If it doesn't know a word but the players know it's legal the computer can be forced to accept it. The player with the longer word gets a point for each letter in it, both players scoring for equal length words. If the computer has managed to do better it will also show you its word.

In the one player option the process is the same with the most absurd thing being that the computer effectively competes with you but doesn't score for itself so that you only have a high score challenge. In the numbers game the player has to choose six numbers from four rows, one of which has numbers of 25, 50, 75 and 100 and the three others containing numbers between 1 and 10. A random number between 100 and 999 is then picked and the players have to achieve that total using the six numbers provided. Addition, subtraction, multiplication and division can all be used and you don't need to use all of the six numbers. Again this has to be done within 30 seconds. At the end the computer will show you how to do the calculation if you didn't manage it.

The final stage is an anagram which you have to unravel to form a nine letter word, again within the 30 second time limit. All this is fine as a two player game but it has all the limitations of that and the rather absurd situation of a one player game that could so easily have been a lot more interesting than it is. Good quiz action though, that may well get you thinking.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Fine.

AW

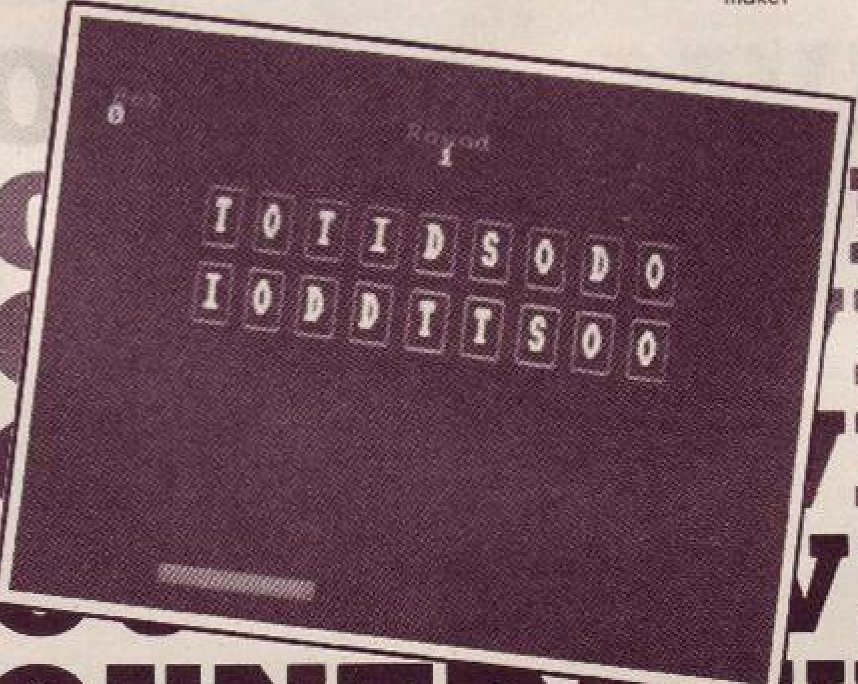
G O O D N E W S

- ▶ Competitive two player game.
- ▶ Words and numbers tests to get you thinking.
- ▶ Good pressure format against the clock.

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Why didn't they implement the one player option as well as they could?
- ▶ Many people don't like quiz games.

What's the longest word you can make?



COUNTDOWN

GRAPHICS	17%	
SONICS	13%	
GRAB FACTOR	61%	
STAYING POWER	50%	
A A RATING	56%	

GLASS
Quicksilva/Argus Press, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This is a multi stage arcade game that puts you behind the controls of a spacecraft facing a daunting challenge against hordes of deadly aliens. The stages vary quite a lot in nature but nearly all of them involve a whole heap of mindless blasting.

The aim is to penetrate the alien defences and destroy three cities with your "nukes". The defences are split up into different stages that appear in a set order and last for a set time. Some of them are dangerous to your ship which has a limited number of shields but together they combine to make a real war of attrition.

The display is forward from the ship which can be moved left and right to alter the view and has an instrument panel below. The only areas of real interest on this panel are the time and shield gauges. The top display is usually bare except for the "glass" surface the ship skims over and the hazards that sometimes appear.

The ship has lasers that fire into the centre of the screen, although there is no sight to show you the exact position. The first stage has a single random alien who appears in the distance and wobbles his way towards you, making him difficult to hit. Later versions of this have the alien moving more erratically and requiring more hits to get rid of him.

Other alien blasting stages include one where they pop up over the horizon to shoot at you and then duck down again, and one where upright aliens move horizontally past the display occasionally shooting. Some slightly different stages involve shooting bits off a slowly passing spacecraft and dodging pillars as they come towards you.

This last stage is a tough one because the pillars automatically move towards you and steering between them can be quite difficult at times. If the ship collides with one or gets stuck in front the shield gets

SECOND OPINION

This "game" is just about the most tedious thing I've ever seen. Nothing comes and gets you. The columns can be vaguely interesting at first, just because you have to actually do something about them – but it doesn't last. The nuking sequence is a real damp squib, then it's just more of the same. At the end of all this it suggests you become a tax inspector/alien zoo-keeper/3rd rate zombie. If you paid good money for the program, it could have a point.

AW

knocked away very fast. At the end of each stage there is a slight pause before proceeding to the next.

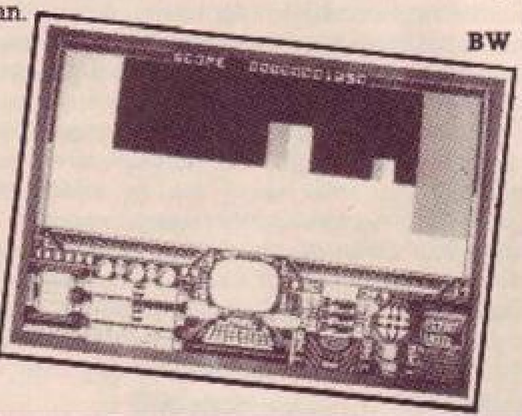
Eventually you'll come to the city where a nuke is automatically released to destroy it but you'll probably end up asking yourself why you bothered. The graphics are disappointing, despite some nice alien designs, because there is little on screen and awful use of colour. The gameplay is terribly boring with stage after stage being repeated giving you the same task and requiring little in the way of skill or quick reactions. The whole thing is repetitive and predictable and won't even be of interest to a mindless shoot-em-up fan.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Everything's visible, but you could play just as well without looking at the screen anyway.

AW



GOOD NEWS

► Several different types of stage.

BAD NEWS

► Little happening on screen and bad use of colour.
► Repetitive and unexciting gameplay.
► Requires little skill and no thought.
► A game can last for ages without even trying.

GRAPHICS	45%
SONICS	21%
GRAB FACTOR	31%
STAYING POWER	27%
A A RATING	29%

COMMANDO

Elite Systems, £9.95 cass, £14.95 disc joystick or keys

At last the OFFICIAL version of the arcade game has arrived, some time after its two imitators *Who Dares Wins II* and *Rambo*. The idea behind the game is simple – shoot everything that moves and if it doesn't move shoot it anyway.

You control a character called Super Joe who has to fight a one man war against overwhelming enemy odds using just a machine gun and hand grenades. The action takes place on a battlefield that scrolls down the screen as Joe makes his way up it. In fact Joe can *only* advance though since the screen will not scroll upwards if he gets a sudden attack of cowardice.

SECOND OPINION

Amazingly mindless, totally frantic action – I love it! Gives your Arnold a touch of the Schwarzenegers – and you'll need arms like old Arnie, too, just to cope with the punishing effort of all that blasting. Forget WDW II, forget Bob Wade's opinion – this is what we want. And it's tough!

AW



More bullets and bombs than the USA and USSR put together

Joe shoots in his direction of movement and can keep up a pretty heavy rate of fire, spraying bullets all over the screen. If the fire button is held down he'll also throw grenades up the screen. The most effective fire pattern will take a while to perfect but once developed you have a pleasing ability to inflict death and mayhem.

The aim is to get through three areas of increasingly difficult opposition and destroy an enemy fortress at the end of it. On the way there are also two other smaller fortresses to be overcome. When Joe arrives at one the gates open and out pour masses of enemy soldiers from the fortress and from surrounding areas. Every single one has to be wiped out or got off the screen before Joe can progress to the next area. This isn't easy under very heavy fire from a large weight of numbers.

Another problem for Joe is that not only is he in danger from the enemies bullets and grenades, he also loses a life if he runs into a soldier – rotten at hand-to-hand combat, don't you know. On later stages things get really tough with bazooka launchers wandering around and fast accurate fire coming from soldiers in vehicles.

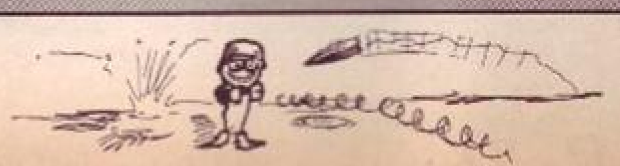
Joe has to keep on the move because the enemy fire is very accurate so that there is no time to rest and no safe spots to take a breather in. The enemy soldiers come at you from all sorts of positions: off the edge of the screen, behind rocks, out of caves, from the back of troop carriers and off hilltops. They may also shoot at you from trenches, pillboxes and mortar emplacements.

The only help you can get is from piles of hand grenades found lying around which can be picked up to replenish your stock. These are most useful when blowing up vehicles though and not so good for close in-fighting with soldiers. When you die you restart from one of several different set positions, depending on how far you've gone.

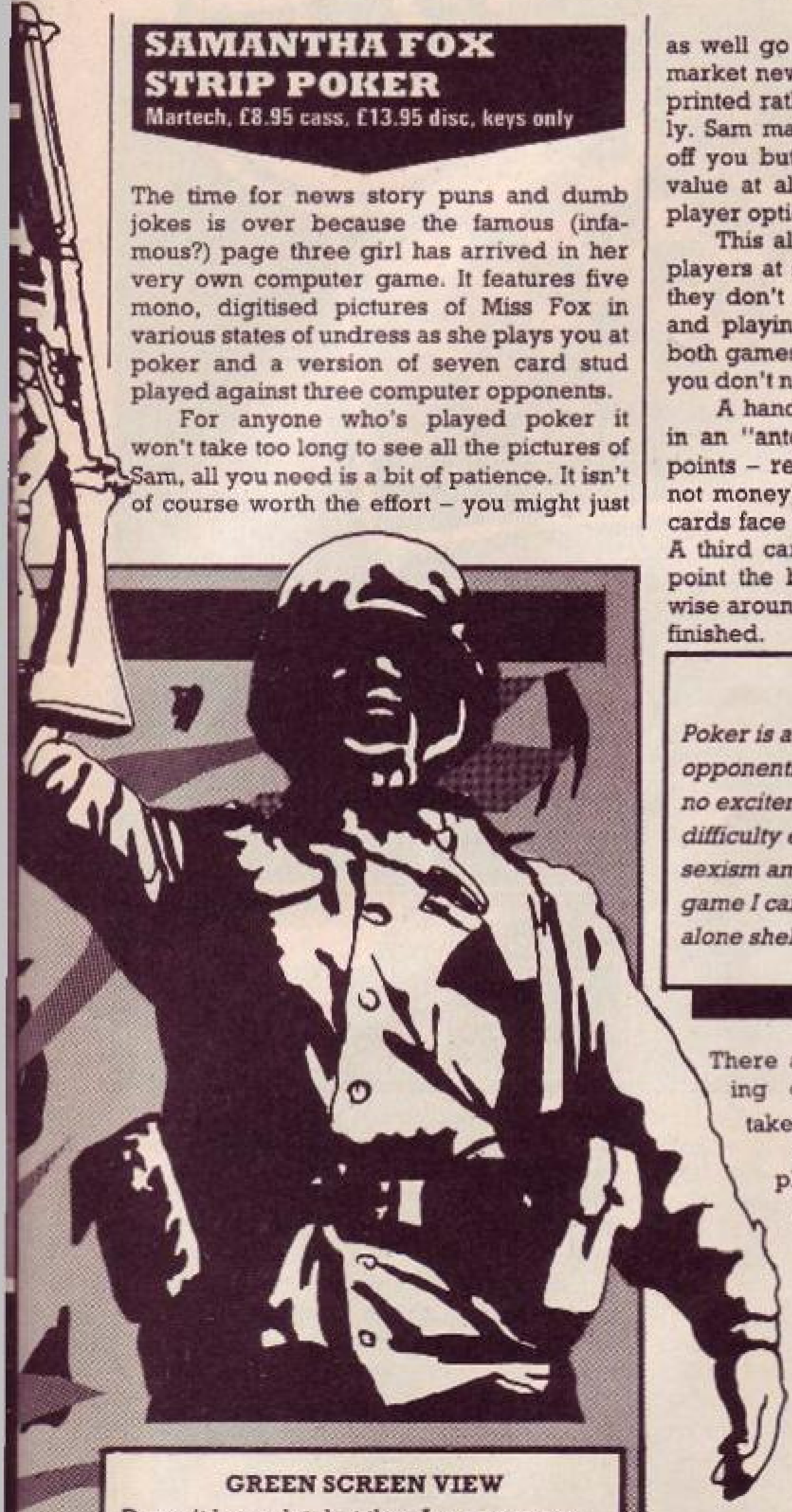
There are plenty of different obstacles that appear on screen including rivers with bridges over them, tunnels under roadways, trees, trenches, rocks and walls. These are nicely drawn and that combines well with the smooth scrolling. The music that plays throughout the action also combines well with the shooting and grenade noises although after a while you may find it starts to get on your nerves.

The game is certainly one for the mindless blasters that will really test the reflexes and the muscles in your joystick hand. However it can become enormously frustrating because of the way you can so easily get killed after an awful lot of effort. This spoiled the game for me resulting in lots of expletives and physical violence. *Who Dares Wins II* had more of a strategic element to it that still gives it the edge – this is more mindless and hand cramping.

BW







SAMANTHA FOX STRIP POKER

Martech, £8.95 cass, £13.95 disc, keys only

The time for news story puns and dumb jokes is over because the famous (infamous?) page three girl has arrived in her very own computer game. It features five mono, digitised pictures of Miss Fox in various states of undress as she plays you at poker and a version of seven card stud played against three computer opponents.

For anyone who's played poker it won't take too long to see all the pictures of Sam, all you need is a bit of patience. It isn't of course worth the effort – you might just as well go out and buy a copy of a down market newspaper and see the same thing printed rather larger and a lot more clearly. Sam may take the occasional large pot off you but if the program is to have any value at all it has to come from the four player option.

This allows you to take on three other players at seven card stud and fortunately they don't take their clothes off. The rules and playing procedure are the same for both games so if you know seven card stud you don't need to know anything else.

A hand starts with each player putting in an "ante" of one (you start with 1,000 points – remember you're playing for fun not money). Each player is then dealt two cards face down which only he can look at. A third card is then dealt face up. At this point the betting starts and passes clockwise around the table until all players have finished.

SECOND OPINION

Poker is a game that needs real live opponents, strip poker doubly so. There's no excitement to either game, and no real difficulty either. You can argue about sexism amongst yourselves, but any poker game I can beat is not worth playing, let alone shelling out good money for.

AW

There are five basic options depending on the situation: pass – a player takes no further part in the hand, check – stay in game without placing money in the pot, bet – put a stake in the pot, call – match a previous players bet, raise – call another players bet and increase it. The computer decides which ones are available to you and puts a limit on how much you can stake each time.

Three more cards are dealt face up to each player with betting continuing after each round until the final seventh card is dealt face down. The final round of betting takes place after which the cards are revealed and the player who can form the best hand of five cards from his seven wins the pot. Play then proceeds to another hand until all but one player has gone bust.

The game plays pretty good poker but loses all the tension of bluff and the excitement of gambling. The "hook" in having Sam Fox is totally pointless and, for many, offensive. The less we see of this sort of "game" the better.

BW

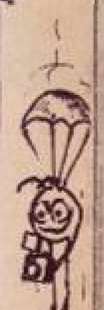
G O O D   N E W S

▶ **Plays reasonably good poker.**
▶ **Seven card stud is more interesting than five card.**

B A D   N E W S

▶ **Sexist drivel.**
▶ **Loses excitement and bluff of real poker.**

▶ **Poker has limited appeal and nobody plays it for long.**
▶ **You might as well buy The Sun and a pack of cards instead.**





GREEN SCREEN VIEW

It's still playable in green, and it's still not worth playing.

AW

GRAPHICS	44%	
SONICS	13%	
GRAB FACTOR	41%	
STAYING POWER	36%	
A A RATING	40%	

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Doesn't lose a lot, but then Joe was green anyway.

AW

G O O D   N E W S

▶ **Non-stop action – the enemy soldiers just don't stop coming.**
▶ **Good scrolling and landscape.**
▶ **Nice features like bazookas, pillboxes and vehicles.**
▶ **Music and sound effects mix well.**

B A D   N E W S

▶ **Can be terribly frustrating.**
▶ **Mindless blasting – just keep running and shooting.**

GRAPHICS	81%	
SONICS	80%	
GRAB FACTOR	78%	
STAYING POWER	74%	
A A RATING	76%	

3D CLOCK CHESS

CP Software, PCW 8256/8512, £19.95 disk



This chess program for both slim and fat Joyces was 'created in consultation with International Grandmaster and British Champion Jon Speelman' and carries his endorsement: 'with its strong playing program and excellent 3D graphics I can confidently recommend *3D Clock Chess* to all lovers of the Royal Game.' Well, if it's good enough for Jon, it's good enough for me. And you.

In fact, *3D CC* was far *too* good for me. It thrashed me repeatedly and mercilessly. Now I don't claim to be an ace chess player, but I'm not a complete dummy. I can beat *Cyrus* on level 3 any day of the week. I can beat Bob Wade. But *3D CC* plays a tough old game, whatever the option you choose, and I didn't get a look in.

Rather than having levels of play, this program asks you to set a time in which it will respond. The longer the time, the more lines of play it can analyse. Unless you're a very strong player it won't need more than 20 or 30 seconds to come up with some powerful moves. If you prefer, you can set its limit to match the time you yourself are taking per move.

Another useful, but frightening option, includes the clock game, in which you set the time for the total game on the clocks. If you want, you can have as little as five minutes. Naturally, if your time runs out, you lose.

Graphically, the game is pretty good. The 3D display is very similar to the game CP produced on the CPCs – Staunton-ish pieces that somehow aren't as sharply outlined as they could be but nonetheles are easily differentiated. The 3D effect is very well done.

Moves are entered using algebraic notation. Don't worry if this is not familiar to you – pressing Z will display the co-ordinates on screen. The program contains all the other features you would expect from computer chess: recommended moves, inversion of the board, self play, display previous moves etc.

3D Clock Chess is an excellent chess program that will test even stronger players. It should provide a welcome interlude in that novel for all you PCW owners.

PC

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **All the options you need.**
- ▶ **Good display.**
- ▶ **Game can be from blitz up to marathon.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Why does it cost £5 more than CPC disk software?**

GRAPHICS	77%
SONICS	5%
GRAB FACTOR	82%
STAYING POWER	88%
A A RATING	90%

SWORDS AND SORCERY

PSS, £9.95 cass, keys only

This game has taken so long from conception to actual appearance that PSS probably can't bear to think of the number of man hours that have gone into it. The question of course is whether it's all been worthwhile and whether the "Midas adventure concept" will take off allowing many add on modules to the original game.

At its simplest the game is an attempt to implement "Dungeons and Dragons" on a computer and give the same sense of role-playing. Obviously there are a number of advantages and disadvantages to putting the action on computer and the result is not the same as the real thing.

SECOND OPINION

If BW finds this atmospheric, he's obviously pretty easy to please. The dungeon has all the eeriness, interest and character of an office block. The gameplay is a waste of effort, the grab is non-existent and the program as a whole pretty much a dead loss. If you like D&D, you'll still find this a bad game.

AW

You can begin the game by creating your own playing character in preference to Flubbit the Dull with whom you will otherwise be stuck. The character can be named, trained under 12 masters in different skills and then armed at an armoury before entering the game. The character begins in a rectangular dungeon but there are three others to be discoveredof the same size.

The screen on which everything takes place consists of several areas of varying importance. The actual forward view of the character in the top left is quite nice and moves reasonably well but is only of use for identifying things or people in front of you. On its right is a display where either the map of the dungeon or a status display is shown. The map shows the characters on it, excluding those concealed in rooms while the status display is used for informing you of the character's status during fights and his magic numbers representing his skills.

At the bottom of the screen are two menus, one for conducting conversations with other characters and the other for using all the commands in the game. Conversations tend to be pretty graphic with plenty of imaginative abusive language but they can be useful on occasions. The command menus are where most of the nitty gritty takes place and familiarity with them is an important thing to learn.

There is an aim to the game for those who want one but you'll probably find that if you're going to enjoy the game you won't really need to take any notice of this anyway. Most of the action involves fighting with characters encountered in the dungeon corridors or protecting objects in the rooms.

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

No problems seeing the dungeon if that's what you want.

AW

Fights take place in real time and the outcome is determined by your character's status in relation to the opponent and by what attacking and defence moves are made. Objects must be collected and have many different uses and properties that may be magical or merely practical. Amongst the items are treasure, foodstuffs, weapons and armour but you may not be aware of the full potential of what you hold.

There are plenty of hidden depths to the game that are touched on in the instructions but take real perseverance to find out about. These include the skills your character acquires, uses of objects and behaviour of opponents. To get the most out of the game you'll have to become very heavily

66 ▶

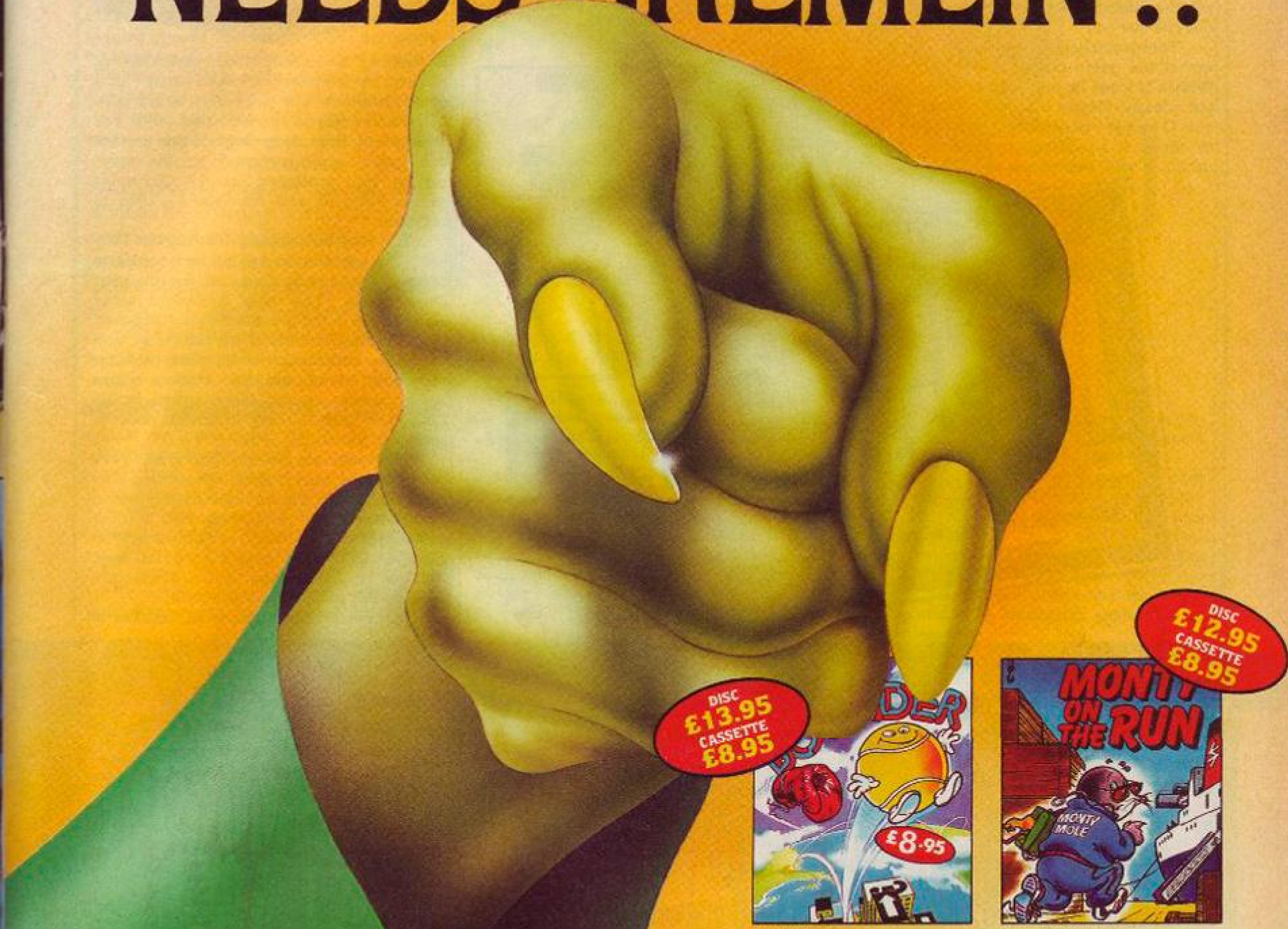
GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Plenty of depth for those who stick with it.**
- ▶ **Catches some of the atmosphere and "real time" excitement of D and D.**
- ▶ **Packed with characters, objects and things to discover.**
- ▶ **Original and funny at times.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Tremendously difficult to appreciate properly.**
- ▶ **Can all too easily become an uninteresting fighting game.**

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BOUNDER

"10 levels of fun make this torture excellent value for money. Nova rating. Definitely one of those 'just another go' games. Game of the month February" – Computer Gamer. "The most compulsive game I've ever played. If you don't buy it you'll never know what you've missed." says Gary Penn, Zzap! 64. Gold Medal Award 97% overall.

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Super fit and desperate for freedom our frightened hero finds refuge with the criminal underworld who offer him his chance to breathe fresh air and bask in the sunlight once again. Monty must select the correct five elements of his freedom kit from the many he's offered and not miss out on the hidden gold coins that will make him a mole of leisure.





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The evil goblin is wreaking havoc on an unsuspecting world, casting spells and banishing its treasures to his underground factory deep in the bowels of the earth. How can he be stopped? What can we do? Who can do it? There's only one saviour – our hero – Thing on a Spring!
Complete the magical jigsaw and break his fiendish spell.

Gremlin Graphics Software Limited, Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. Tel: 0742-753423

involved and spend many hours at the keyboard – the question mark is over whether there is enough initial interest to get you that far.

The presentation, depth and atmosphere of the game cannot really be faulted. Where it loses its audience is in the initial complexity. Maybe it's meant to be like the real D and D – played by an exclusive club to which it is difficult to gain entry. No doubt it will become a much loved cult game offering endless hours of pleasure for those who persevere with it, but many people just won't want to put in the time and effort.

BW

GRAPHICS	67%
SONICS	38%
GRAB FACTOR	53%
STAYING POWER	76%
A A RATING	70%



The evil, eerie dungeon where many an act of combat takes place

MOVIE

Imagine, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Remember all those private detectives in Hollywood movies that wore dirty raincoats, couldn't talk properly, drank like fishes and enjoyed shooting bad guys? For all budding Humphrey Bogarts that is what this game – programmed by the same people who produced the AA Christmas games *Kung Fu* and *Number 1* – tries to recreate.

You play the starring role of Jack Marlow. The mission he has undertaken is to recover a tape recording from the gangster Bugs Malloy. The tape is tucked away somewhere in the game which is composed of 3D rooms connected by doorways and corridors and inhabited by many characters both friend and foe. Marlow walks rather slowly around these rooms in his long mac and *Dynasty* shoulder pads in search of something to do.

The rooms for the most part aren't very colourful but many of them have lots of well drawn furniture that can be moved around. Unfortunately you can't manipulate it in the same style as *Get Dexter!* or *Batman* but just have to admire it or push it out of the way. This is because there is no jumping – presumably it's not Marlow's style.

The other characters consist mostly of

SHADOWFIRE

Beyond, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

At last, at last – the most delayed game in Amstrad history (remember the special offer in issue 1!) has arrived to give icon adventurers a real work out. The icon system and gameplay aren't quite so original these days but there's still plenty to get to grips with.

The action takes place aboard a spaceship, the Zoff 5, where ambassador Kryxix is held hostage by General Zoff. You control the Enigma team as they try to rescue Kryxix, capture Zoff and capture or destroy the spaceship. The team is composed of six members from various races and with differing special skills.

The leader is Zark Montor, a human and expert in weapons, unarmed combat and translation. The only other human is Sevrina Maris – the only woman member of the team – who specialises in picking locks. There are two droids, Manto and Maul who respectively control the transporter and weapons systems. Syylk is an insectoid with mighty fighting powers and a hatred of Zoff. Torik is an avian who serves as a scout and expert in explosives and weapons.

These skills will all be needed on the mission so you'll need to find out who does what best in order to achieve success. The team start on their own ship and have to arm themselves and collect useful objects before being beamed onto the Zoff 5. Once on board they can start exploring and discovering what secrets and dangers the

SECOND OPINION

Icons!! Who needs 'em?? Not me. Too much attention is paid to the trendy control menu and not enough to the actual gameplay, which turns out to be less than exciting. Who cares if ambassador Wotsit has been captured? Who cares if Dino Zoff rules the world?

AW



The team screen showing the six members and General Zoff at top right

men clad in similar long raincoats to yourself, many of whom work for Bugs Malloy and will try to stop you. This they can do by shooting Marlow or punching his lights out. Marlow can do the same to them but has to find guns and preserve the limited supply of bullets. Marlow only gets one life so one careless slip and he's in for the big sleep.

There are other dangers with whom

SECOND OPINION

You could really make an interesting game out of the Bogart setting, but this isn't it. It's pretty enough at first, but the dreadful gameplay and clumsy controls soon become apparent. If you like grenades that go "BOOM!" – literally – then the game may still have something for you, but there's better art deco in Batman.

AW

contact can mean instant death – they make the surroundings more like a haunted house. There are suits of armour (some of which move of their own accord), bouncing dogs (!?) and bouncing balls. These defences have to be avoided and can cause an equally frustrating end to a game as a bullet in the back.

To complete his task Marlow has to find a girl, Tanya, who will lead him to the tape and provide other invaluable assistance. However she is pretty tough to find in the first place and has a twin sister who will lead you into the hands of the gangsters. She's also animated rather oddly making her look distinctly deformed and anorexic.

Movement and action in the game are controlled by an icon system in which a symbol floats between icons. There are commands to drop, pick up (objects not girls), shoot, walk, talk, punch and throw. Some of these are entertaining and indeed useful but the major problem is that they take too long to select within the context of the game. Thus you can't walk and do something else at the same time. This drawback makes particular areas of the game extremely difficult and frustrating.



Jack Marlow stands in his plush office where the game begins

The talk action is perhaps the most interesting allowing you to type speech into a speech bubble and communicate with other characters in the game – ever tried talking to a parrot? Unfortunately this idea also doesn't seem to have been developed to the full and there aren't enough possibilities for having intelligent exchanges as in an adventure game.

There are various objects to be found in the game like guns, bottles and bombs but again their use is limited and there don't appear to be enough puzzles involving them to keep you interested. It's certainly an interesting project that took steps in the right direction but fails on the gameplay side to provide enough to get you really hooked.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Perfectly playable – in fact, it gains quite a bit of atmosphere.

AW

G O O D   N E W S

- ▶ Lots of well drawn and atmospheric locations.
- ▶ Some nice characterization and animation.
- ▶ Original gameplay features.

B A D   N E W S

- ▶ Lack of variety in the action.
- ▶ Icon system hampers control and causes frustrating ends to games.
- ▶ Speech bubbles are a nice idea but don't seem terribly useful.
- ▶ Not enough object manipulation or objects to manipulate.

GRAPHICS	70%
SONICS	33%
GRAB FACTOR	62%
STAYING POWER	69%
A A RATING	66%

ship holds.

The screen display is split into two with the top half providing a constant mission command screen and the bottom half being used for various menus and options. The command screen icons show the status of each team member, a view screen of the ship area where the selected person is and a picture of the currently selected person.

A character is selected from a team screen and then has four icon menus from which to choose. The first one is a status screen from which the other three are accessed and shows the characters agility, strength, stamina and weight. These may change during the mission depending on what the character does.

The other three menus are for movement, objects and battle. Movement simply allows you to move around the ship using arrow icons, except of course where you encounter locked doors or hostile characters. The object screen lets you to manipulate the objects in the game allowing you to pick up, drop, activate and ready them for use. The battle screen controls the fight action for the character so that when confronted by an enemy they can attack, defend or retreat. They can also scan adjacent locations to identify the characters in them.

Once you've got to grips with all these icons, characters and scenario you can actually discover what the gameplay is like. The icons can be operated quite speedily but on the whole there is no sense of action or excitement as the characters roam the ship. There's a lot of depth to the game and it will take a fair while to crack but the adventure element has got slightly lost in the concentration on icons. You'll need patience to get the full enjoyment out of this game.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Icons are bit murky, but the game's still playable.

AW

G O O D   N E W S

- ▶ Good screen and icon design in lots of attractive colours.
- ▶ Icon and multi character control add to the gameplay.
- ▶ Lots of depth and difficulty.
- ▶ This is not a hallucination – the game is coming out.

B A D   N E W S

- ▶ Difficult to get to grips with.
- ▶ Gameplay can be very slow and unexciting.

GRAPHICS	84%
SONICS	57%
GRAB FACTOR	65%
STAYING POWER	77%
A A RATING	75%

WINTER GAMES

US Gold/Epyx, £9.95 cass, £14.95 disc, joystick or keys

Sporting simulations will always be favourites amongst computer owners and the software houses are happy to supply them with a varied and ever increasing range of choices. This latest from US Gold recreates seven events from the Winter Olympics and features some amazing alpine attractions on the game screens.

The seven events are bobsleigh, hot dog aerials, speed skating, ski jump, figure skating, free skating and biathlon. There are disc and tape versions that have all the events but differ substantially in presentation. The disc version has an opening ceremony and a less annoying loading system than the tape. The tape version loads only two events at a time and the biathlon on its own, which means you may get a lot of coding for your money but you also get a lot of long loading waits.



The skier prepares to launch himself down the ski jump slope



The bobsled sits at the top of the run waiting to go.

SECOND OPINION

This is the way sports games ought to be – no waggling, no joystick- mangling, just skill. With the possible exception of the bobsleigh, all the events are challenging and interesting. Add to this the picture postcard scenery and the nicely handled music, and you've got one great game – unless you buy the tape version, in which case you've got four not-quite-so-good games.

AW

The game gets away from the heavy waggling idea of decathlon games and relies on skill and timing to do well in each event. The first two events on tape are bobsleigh and hot dog aerials. The bobsleigh presents you with a split screen, the left side showing an overhead view of the sled's progress down the course and the right one a view down the course from behind the sled. The action involves steering into corners so that the sled doesn't overturn while trying to take the quickest line down the course.

Hot dogging is a relatively recent sport and the aerials event involves performing complex movements like in a gymnastic vault off a small ski jump. You're given a side view of the jumps as the skier tries to perform as many stunts and flips as possible in good style.

Speed skating and the ski jump come next. Speed skating pits the player against the computer or another player. The skater is viewed from the side and controlled by rhythmic joystick pushes for each push with a skate. The ski jump takes place on two screens. First the jumper skis down the slope and has to be jumped off the end, then controlled in the air to get as much distance as possible but in good style with a clean landing.

Figure skating and free skating are very similar, presenting the player with complicated jumps and spins to perform. The skater is viewed from the side on the screen and skates along a seemingly endless rink. In figure skating seven manoeuvres have to be performed in one minute and as cleanly as possible, while in free skating you have two minutes to perform each manouevre three times. Marks are deducted for falls and awkward moves.

The biathlon is last and combines and endurance skiing event with rifle shooting. You have to ski up and down hills and on the flat using rhythmic joystick strokes as fast as possible. At intervals five targets will appear which have to be shot to avoid a time penalty. While skiing your pulse rate goes up – the higher it gets the harder the targets are to shoot.

The screens for each event are superbly drawn and although there isn't always a lot of action what there is has been well thought out. The gameplay itself is very enjoyable and for some of the events demands plenty of concentration and skill. Happily this shouldn't ruin too many joysticks but it will sharpen up your timing no end. Disc users will be spared the frustrating loading system but will have to pay £5 for the privilege. It's probably US Gold's best release, and will have you playing around in the snow all summmer.

BW

GREEN SCREEN VIEW

Loses a lot of the scenic interest, but at least you won't get snow-blindness.

AW

GOOD NEWS

- **Seven exciting events.**
- **Delightful graphic backgrounds.**
- **Excellent gameplay with some tough events.**
- **Skill and timing required – not waggling.**
- **Competitive action between up to four players.**
- **Marvellous musical interludes.**

BAD NEWS

- **Nasty loading for tape users.**

GRAPHICS	94%
SONICS	89%
GRAB FACTOR	87%
STAYING POWER	92%
A A RATING	90%

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VICE OF THE PEOPLE

That Rambo muscles into VoP this month – some of you seem to disagree with us about its merits relative to Who Dares Wins II. As long as it doesn't lead to gratuitous violence...

It just goes to show that if you don't agree with our reviews we'll broadcast your opinion to the Amstrad Action-reading world. And if you just want to say that you do agree with us, we'll still print it. So get your comments down on a postcard or the back of an envelope and send them to: Voice of the People, Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.

GET DEXTER
PSS
AA Rating 94%

Formidable! Yes, I have been fortunate enough to try this latest gamefrom across the Channel and it really does put some British software to shame. With superbly colourful 3D graphics, it puts *Nightshade* in the shade – yet without comopromising on the gameplay. Whilst not as large as Ultimate's monochrome offerings it's just as mappable and much more fun. It's been writtten with a strong sense of humour, with tyhe bouncing on the beds and the head-on-a-frog's-leg, Zunk. Although I'm still sticking to Granny Smith's apples I'd certainly like to try some more French software!
Dave Constable, Locksbottom



This game has the best 3D graphics I have ever seen on the good 'ol Amstrad. It's going to be bigger than Bob Wade's ears. Not buying this game makes you a complete and utter boring piece of skin and bone.
RJ Connelly, Crofton

DOOMSDAY BLUES
PSS
AA Rating 80%

I enjoyed this game right from the start. The combination of brilliant graphics and well thought-out gameplay makes this a must for all of you.
RJ Connelly, Crofton

This has an intriguing basis and, while written in muted colours, is very attractive. The hero, with his 'Brucie' chin, is well animated. I love the way he guzzles down the bottles of wine - just like a true Frenchman!

The only disappointing part of the game is the robots – dull and unimaginative. Nevertheless, this game is excellent.
Dave Constable, Locksbottom

PING PONG
Imagine
AA Rating 74%

I had waited many long weeks for this game and when I finally managed to get it I was in no way disappointed. It's a lot more playable than *Match Point*, the graphics are very good and colourful and the floating hands work extremely well.



The controls are very easy to master and after a few goes it is easy to beat the first couple of levels. But after that it gets a lot harder and some great games can be had. Watch out Desmond Douglas!
RDJ Connelly, Crofton

THE MUSIC SYSTEM
Rainbird

After hearing the cool music on *Tombstowne* and *Master of the Lamps* I thought I'd have a go at making music myself. But, alas, the lack of a decent synth or drum sound brought this program down. This is NOT good value.
Emmet Masterson, Sidcup

This long-awaited music writing utility for the Arnold lives up to its past conversions. Having seen both the BBC and the CBM64 versions on *Micro Live* it seems that the Amstrad version is the best. Its only real failure is the recording facility which, even if you set the resolution to 'beginner', is difficult to use. But then is the piano or any other instrument easy to play at first? This is a great piece of software and I look forward to the next piece of software from Rainbird.
JR Gigney, Chelmsford

RAMBO
Ocean
AA Rating 58%

This is on the same lines as *WDW2* but has more lasting appeal to try to rescue Banks and the other comrades. The graphics are good, the sound is reasonable and the gameplay is hard going.
Brad Howarth, Saltford

At first I thought – not another *Commando* clone! And I was right. It is. However, this has more of an arcade adventure feel to it than, say, *WDW2*, which is a straightforward 'shoot anything that moves game'.
The Rambo sprite is very good and is equipped with a headband which is there to hold his brain in. The game itself is very hard and there is an annoying tendency to die every few seconds. It would have been a help to have 3 lives instead of just an energy bar.
RDJ Connelly, Crofton

This is the first film tie-in that I've actually enjoyed. The graphics are excellent and the sprites are wonderfully animated. Unlike *WDW2* the screen continuously scrolls to accomodate the playing area and this is very similar to *TLL* when you fly at sub-sonic speed. This is the best game from Ocean for ages. The only people who may not like playing this game are pacifists.
Anon.

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

WAY OF THE TIGER
Gremlin Graphics
AA Rating 70%

Superlative animation really makes this one a winner, but there's little in the way of sound. Other touches like the figures in the background of the sword-fighting help to make this one THE martial arts simulation.
Emmet Masterson, Sidcup

The graphics are superb, excellent sound effects and brilliant triple scrolling. I liked the way that if you were kicked in the stomach you move back clutching it. The pole has jumping fish and the samurai has an owl flying around. The varying array of your opponents all fight differently every game. No doubt the best all round game.
J Willeboorcese

This is like *Exploding Fist* but about 10 times bigger. Beautiful graphics, with moving backgrounds, men carrying carriages and owls flying across. Loads of moves, ultrasmooth animation, nice music and plenty of opponents. Only one annoying feature – if you jump on the log, you usually fall off which makes it too easy to lose on that event. Overall, a real winner.
Matthew Todd, Altrincham

SPINDIZZY
Electric Dreams
AA Rating 96%

I ordered *Spindizzy* through AA mail order system and during the days of witing I was questioning whether a game could be as good as you make out. I was a bit disappointed with the loading screen but now I know why AA said you won't be able to stop playing it for weeks after buying it. This game is INCREDIBLE and is probably the best game I have seen on any computer. The graphics rating should have been 97% and the sonics 75%, as a tune would have spoilt it. I don't know how they fit this into 64K. If you don't buy this you are completely mad.
Matthew Todd, Hale

An Amstrad original which will be the envy of all other computer owners. Colourful graphics and tough gameplay combine to provide a compulsive challenge.
Gerry Hughes, Cranleigh

It's men in white coats time for every Arnold owner who buys this brilliant game by the author of *Confuzion* Paul Shirley. What can you really say about it that hasn't already been said? Except that it is simply the most addictive game that has been produced in a long while. I can't wait for *I of the Mask*.
John Gigney, Chelmsford, Essex

NOMAD
Ocean
AA Rating 63%

Lots of people will say that this is just a souped up game of *Scramble* or soemthing similar – well they're wrong. This is a good, addictive game that keeps making you come back to get just a bit further. Graphics are good but the sound is uncool. On the title page it says "Music by ...", well I've got news – there's none that I've heard.
Simon O'Connell, Sidcup

Ocean have done it again, by this I mean they have released a really dull game. The graphics aren't bad but by no means outstanding and the sound nearly destroyed my ear drums. The idea behind the game is boring and the game itself is boring. Buy it at your peril.
R J Connelly, Crofton

BATTLE OF THE PLANETS
Mikrogen
AA Rating 64%

A very enjoyable shoot-em-up with very fast vector graphics and some reasonable sonics. It's a bit like *Elite* without the trading element and more things to blast. The graphics are probably superior to *Elite* but there's not as much depth – lasting appeal may be a bit suspect. Nevertheless worth buying.
David Baxter, Carluke

BLOCKBUSTERS
Macsen
AA Rating 14%

This rating really surprised me, it should have been about 60%. Mother and I have had some cracking games on it. AW said quiz games were a waste of time, but they are quite good if there's a lot of questions, good graphics and plenty of sound.
S Shemilt, Swansea

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD
Ocean
AA Rating 83%

Excellent use of sound and colour are definitely this game's strong point, but it's let down by a poorly defined main character. In other words a blocky man. As one of my friends said to me it should be renamed "Frankie goes to Legoland."
Emmet Masterson, Sidcup

TAU CETI
CRL
AA Rating 88%

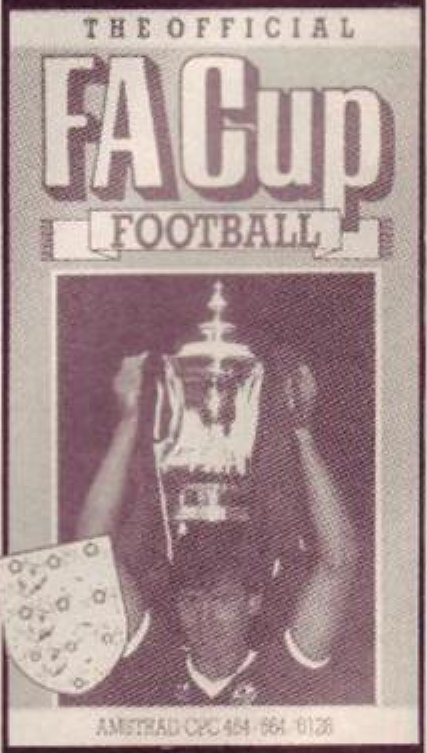
CRL have certainly come to the fore with this game. The view-screen graphics are excellent with nice touches like the shooting stars and infra-red night vision. The game task seems difficult but not unrealistic. However I don't like the idea of rearranging the reactor rods – I would have preferred something more challenging and original. I also thought the screens of building interiors were not that hot. These are minor niggles though – this truly is a superb game, definitely one to rave about.
Dave Constable, Locksbottom

This game has been described as the planet born *Elite* and so it is, except that everything is faster and is filled in and shaded. The graphics are great and the content of the game at first seems greater than that of *Elite*. It's similar in style to that of an arcade adventure but it is more than that. It's very difficult to get into but once mastered it's very rewarding to play. I especially like the bit when you call up the status of the vessel whilst flying so that the view screen shrinks into the corner where you can still see the outside world in miniature. A great game that deserves all it gets. (It should have been Mastergame.)
John Gigney, Cold Norton

I wouldn't go as far as to claim – as CRL do – that it's the best game ever written, but it comes quite close. The graphics are excellent and the sound effects ample. The cockpit view is very solid and metallic looking and the explosions very good. Should keep the average games player going for a couple of light years.
David Baxter, Carluke

MELBOURNE DRAW
Melbourne House

Melbourne House has come up with the best graphics utility. As with its Spectrum version it is easy to use but this is far more powerful than the Spectrum version. All commands used by the program can be accessed via the keyboard using two or three letter mnemonics. If you forget any any of them pressing ENTER will access drop down menus from which any of the commands can be drawn. I thought *Screen Designer* was the best but *Melbourne Draw* has changed my mind.
John Gigney, Cold Norton



FA CUP FOOTBALL
Virgin Games
AA Rating 41%

Don't buy this game. To say the least it is extremely boring. You are hardly asked to make any decisions apart from which style of football you want to play. All you do is sit and wait for the Cup Final to come and by that time I didn't care who won.
R J Connelly, Crofton

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Put up your staves, fellow followers of the strait and Narrow path! This month the Cowled Crusader brings news of Infocom's latest game, soon to be available along with other Infocoms megahits on CP/M for the Arnold. Plus news of the winners of our Write-An-Adventure competition, reviews, previews, and a really enormous Clue pot.

Pilgrim



Redhawk

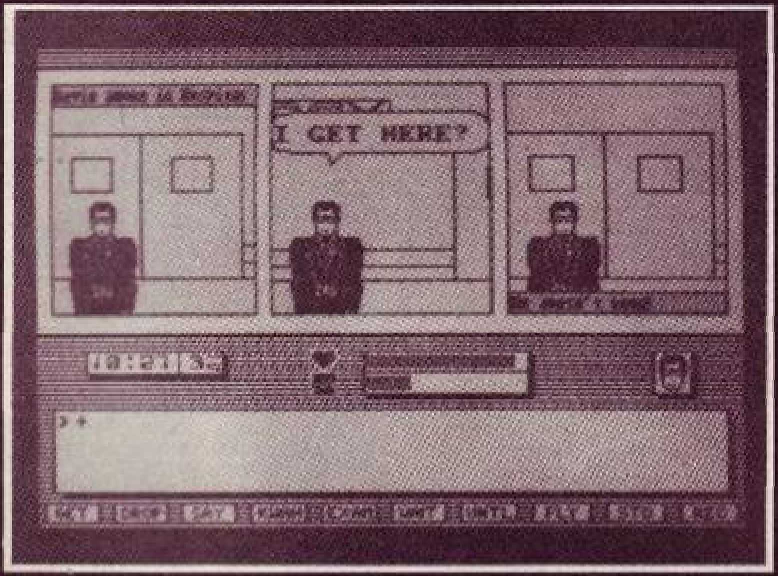
Melbourne House, £8.95 cass

Amstrad owners may not be very familiar with *Zim Sala Bim*, a Melbourne House program that attempted to enhance the role of graphics in an adventure by animating them and linking them to the player's inputs. In *ZSB*, if you typed 'Look', the hero would cautiously look from one side of the screen to the other, and if you moved location the graphics would scroll accordingly.

Zim Sala Bim was not, in the Pilg's view, a terribly successful game, but now Melbourne House have come up with another new idea which hops onto the shelves this month under the name Redhawk.

Redhawk is, and I quote the blurb, 'a continuous comic strip which unfolds as the game is played. The game has text input, with a unique comic-based graphics output system.'

Hmmm...sounds positively Marvel-lous, doesn't it? Unfortunately, my fellow Pilgs, this new direction in adventuring does not, in my humble opinion, actually get us anywhere very interesting.



However, it's certainly original. The screen format boasts three square windows in a row on the top half of the screen, which represent three consecutive 'frames' of a comic strip. Action takes place in the window on the extreme right and as new events occur the pictures shift along. This means that by looking at the picture on the extreme left you can still see the events that transpired a few moments before.

The story that's sketched out on these pages concerns one Kevin, who can't remember anything except the word 'Kwah' which, if he says it (or rather, if you type it) transforms him into a superhero - Redhawk. Redhawk's mission in the game is to stop a team of super-baddies (including Merlin, Fusor, and The Rat) from blowing up the local power-station.

You play by entering text commands as normal in a window below the comic strip, which are then either acted on or rejected by the program. The parser is rather mysterious - it appears to be impressive at first by swallowing some very complex inputs, such as SAY "HELLO" TO LESLEY but then rather spoils this impression by responding "OPEN" CONFUSES KEVIN when you enter OPEN DOOR. Other, similarly basic commands are sometimes likewise rejected and the feeling after playing for a while is that the input system is somewhat frustrating and the real vocabulary rather small.

Apart from trying to stop the baddies, Redhawk/Kevin has to increase his local street credibility by nabbing the occasional baddie. There's a small meter that shows how popular you are, and the level rises when you, say, arrest a mugger and take him to the police station. Popularity is essential otherwise certain characters will not co-operate and life becomes rather difficult.

You also have to keep a close eye on your energy level. Kevin, paradoxically, appears to have unlimited energy whereas Redhawk soon runs out of steam, especially if you try 'flying' everywhere instead of walking.

At this point the Pilg casts his eyse back over the lines above and realises that it all sounds terribly impressive. Unfortunately in practice the game just didn't grab me at all. First, it's slow. In any normal adventure it's a drag to be told 'You can't go in that direction', but in Redhawk it's a positive annoyance as you have to wait for a new picture to be drawn, with the caption 'Kevin tries to go north but doesn't succeed'.

The constant redrawing of the pictures would be OK if the graphics were something to write home about, but they're not. They're rather crude line drawings that seem acceptable for the first five minutes but, after you've seen them several times, become almost unbearably monotonous. The most successful comic strips nowadays tend to be well drawn - that's part of their appeal, but Redhawk misses out badly here.

Occasional speech bubbles are drawn above appropriate characters and some of these show glimmerings of humour. ARREST ME, REDDUCK shouts a mugger defiantly in the park, which might raise a smile the first time, but elicits only a groan the second time, and after the third time (and the third wait while the message is printed) the Pilg felt like switching off.

I persevered however. There are some reasonable puzzles to be solved here, and the novelty of the comic strip approach holds up for a while. But in the end the poor graphics begin to win out over the mediocre text, the slow pace becomes a major irritation, the erratic parser becomes simply a frustration, and you're left wondering what else you might have spent your £8.95 on.

...And you're also left wondering what someone like Mike Singleton of Lords of Midnight fame could have done with an idea like this. Ah well...

Ballyhoo

Infocom, disk only £28.70

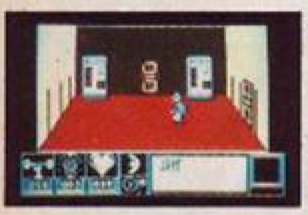
This is Infocom's latest gem, hot on the heels of *Spellbreaker* and *Wishbringer*. It's essentially a who-dunnit, but the setting's an unusual one – as you'll see in a minute. However, and it truly pains the Pilg to say it, I do not rate this particular game as highly as other recent Infocom releases.

That's something of an event in itself, since normally Infocom games draw unqualified praise and each new release

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is (unbelievably) better than the ones before. *Ballyhoo*, it must be said, was a slight disappointment for the Cowled Crusader. Moreover, I'd go further and say that at £28.70 you might be better off buying one of the cheaper range of games – *Sorceror* in particular (which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue).

Ballyhoo is set in the world of the circus, though it's a far cry from the glamour and razzamatazz that one normally associates with it. This particular circus boasts more degenerate wild beasts in the staff quarters than it does in the menagerie, and you'll have to outwit them all if you are to survive.

The plot itself is pretty straightforward. As a devoted circus fan you stick around after the show and happen to overhear a conversation that leaves you seething with righteous indignation. The Circus Owner's daughter has been kidnapped and (worse still) the imbecilic private eye who is taking charge of the case looks like being a disgrace to your home town at best and a negligent crook at worst.

Enter yours truly, after the show, with nothing but 12 dollars in your hand, to save the day by tracking down the little lady and earning your just rewards.

As with most Infocom games there isn't a large number of locations in this game – it's what happens in each one that counts. Once the circus is finished you can try wandering off into town, but the program very firmly calls you back to where the action is. And there's plenty of it – once you've equipped yourself with a skeleton key and a ticket to the show you find yourself in all manner of sticky situations. If you're not sweating it out in the lions' cage, you're trying to climb over the Circus Fat Lady ('The slope's too steep', complains the program), or carrying on a conversation with someone who's simultaneously two different people – half-woman, half-man and (the Pilg reckons) half crazy.

As far as actual gameplay is concerned, the program offers all the usual Infocom features, including dumping script to your printer, altering the 'verbosity' of the location descriptions, and, in *Ballyhoo*'s case, the OOPS function. This is a new command that enables you to persuade the program to accept a misspelt word, and as such can be quite useful and shows the care Infocom take over their games. Should you mistype a word, as in:

HIT THE MIGGET

and the program replies 'I don't understand the word 'migget'', all you have to do is enter 'OOPS MIDGET' and the program amends your command and carries on.

There is an almost bewildering number of command structures for you to play around with, including the now familiar (since *Suspect*) 'Tell me about the...' as well as the possibility of questioning characters with 'Who?', 'Where?', and so on.

Puzzles abound, but to be honest I felt there was something slightly lacking in the game. Of course you need to put this in perspective – a below-average game by Infocom is a world-beater by many other software companies' standards – but nevertheless I was definitely conscious of the program's failure to 'grab' me to quite the same extent as, say, *Wishbringer* did. I don't know whether it was the occasional failure to pay attention to detail (even a spelling mistake in one place) or simply a matter of personal taste, but there you are. I never thought I'd find myself bestowing anything other than rapturous praise upon an Infocom game, but I suppose sooner or later the let-down had to come.

The truth may be that, when you start talking about games as complex and ambitious as *Ballyhoo* or *Wishbringer*, the usual rules of software criticism fall down and it all reduces to a matter of personal taste. Perhaps the Pilg just isn't cut for life under the big top...

Treasure Tunnels

Plasma Touch, 143 Oakfield Road, Whickham, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, £1.50 cass only

This was a pleasant surprise, this was. I've never heard of Plasma Touch, who say they have been producing games for the Spectrum, but they recently sent me a copy of a game written using Incentive Software's *Graphics Adventure Creator*.

I was rather rude, a couple of issues back, about Global Software's *Beer Hunter* (also written using *GAC*) and while I didn't quite give it the famous Pilgrim pasting I did voice a fear that *GAC* might result in unfortunate adventure reviewers like myself being inundated with loads of rubbish. I'm delighted to say that this hasn't been the case, and *Treasure Tunnels* isn't at all a bad effort – certainly worth the 1.50 asking price. After all – what else can you get for £1.50 these days, apart from a Spectrum?

Treasure Tunnels is really desperately old-fashioned in its plot and structure. Using, for the most part, the old verb-noun inputs you wander round a cavernous complex collecting treasure, which must be dumped in the appropriate place.

What's slightly different (apart, of course, from the graphics), is that this game is part of a fantasy series of four games which will eventually be released on one cassette. "The simple 'collecting treasures' plot of *TT* will be altered as the story develops" claim Plasma Touch, and if they keep to their pricing policy I'll certainly be in the queue to see the result.

I haven't finished the game yet, so can't be too precise about how many rooms there are, but every location is vividly described in a style that is just as bit as good as the early Level 9 releases. What's more, the program has been reasonably well thought out, with a combination of ease and challenge to keep the interest up. The graphics are a bit crude at times, but they do add to the atmosphere of the game and I found myself keeping them switched on most of the time during play.

I have to repeat that this game is really quite simple fare, but it is well written, well thought-out, and succeeds in evoking a classic *Colossal Cave* atmosphere – and, of course, it costs only £1.50. Let's see the next one, please, Plasma...

Wishbringer

Infocom, £28.70 disk only

Let's be brutally frank. This program is going to cost you nearly twenty times as much as *Treasure Tunnels*, but the Pilg has no hesitation in recommending it for your collection. Like many of the other Infocom range, it's one of the best reasons I can think of for going out and getting a 6128.

The main thing about *Wishbringer* is that it's what Infocom call an 'introductory level' game. That means that the program has been carefully structured to appeal to those without too much adventuring experience. However, it's one of the few 'introductory' games that I know of that is also eminently suitable for advanced players on account of its humour, wit, and pungent atmosphere.

Wishbringer is firmly in the Infocom fantasy tradition, and it's a remarkable achievement considering that author Brian Moriarty had never attempted an adventure before. The plot is steeped in sentimental simplicity but emerges all the stronger for it. You're a village postman in Festeron and on delivering a small package to the keeper of the Magicke Shoppe you discover that her cat has been stolen.

Worse is to come, though, as you are told that the cat has been kidnapped by the 'Evil One'. There have been so many 'Evil Ones' in adventures that I reckon there must be at least an Evil Dozen, but this particular example makes its presence felt immediately by casting a hideous spell over a fantasy world into which you tumble on leaving the Shoppe. After that it's all up to you, and Wishbringer...

Wishbringer is a small stone that bestows very special powers. You can wish for advice, darkness, flight, foresight, freedom, luck, or rain and believe me, by the time the game's over you'll have wished fervently for all seven more than once. You'll probably have wished for a number of other things too – like a hint book, or an anti-poodle device.

You'll certainly need the latter to deal with a particularly vilelittle cur that crops up early in the game and had the Pilg and his family in fits of laughter...

"The poodle glares at you through eyes red with hatred", warns the program as you attempt to enter a cottage in the

village.
KILL POODLE you enter in desperation.
"Are you KIDDING?", replies the program, "This poodle is MEAN!" And mean it certainly is. On top of all that, you get the usual masterful Infocom way of dealing with even the most obscure inputs, so that it becomes an amusing challenge to try and baffle it. In the post office I immediately attempted to EAT ENVELOPE, but "It seems unlikely that the mysterious envelope would agree with you," replies the program calmly.

Wishbringer is in the best Infocom tradition, which means that, £28.70 allowing, it just has to be yours!

	Atmosphere	Interaction	Challenge	AA-Rating
REDHAWK	58%	63%	68%	58%
BALLYHOO	89%	90%	90%	89%
WISH BRINGER	92%	91%	90%	92%
TREASURE TUNNELS	65%	63%	60%	65%

New recruits this month, Pilgrims, to the ranks of the Undying Ones. Whether you're cornered by a Balrog or lost in Colossal Cave, there'll be someone here who can help you. These worthy Lords have risked their lives in some of the most dangerous locations of Adventureland, and now they are willing to help you miserable lot out of your troubles. So do them all a favour and DON'T expect them to reply to your queries unless you enclose a SAE. Nor should you presume to call them on the 'phone after 9.45pm in the evenings, because if they're not in bed they'll be busy adventuring on their own account – so keep your calls to reasonable hours.

Return to Eden, Red Moon, Worm in Paradise, Erik the Viking, The Hobbit, Never Ending Story, Heroes of Karn, Bored of the Rings, Terrormolinos plus limited help on *Message from Andromeda, Warlord, Robin of Sherwood, Lord of the Rings*
Kevin McCaughey, 134 High Donaghadee Road, Bangor, NI, BT20 4NH Tel: 0247 452809

Colossal Adventure, Forest at the Worlds End
Alex Aird, 139 Bromford Road, Hodge Hill, Birmingham, B36 8HR Tel: 021 327 5046

Jewels of Babylon, Forest at the Worlds End, Message From Andromeda, Mindshadow plus limited help on *Red Moon, Classic Adventure, Seas of Blood, Warlord, Bored of the Rings, Mordons Quest, Terrormolinos, Heroes of Karn*
David Lincoln, 35 Stainbeck Avenue, Meanwood, Leeds LS7 2QT

All Games
Tony Treadwell, 17 Headley Way, Headington, Oxford, OX3 0LR Tel: 0865 68637

Mordons Quest, Classic Adventure, and others
Timothy Gurney, 10 Garwyn Avenue, Roudnwood, Meliden, Prestatyn, Clwyd, LL19 8LR (Penpals also wanted – male or female)

Humble pie

One thing that definitely needs changing is James Adamson's telephone number. James appears in the April issue as an Honoured Lord of Adventure, but should readers still be using this issue to contact him, please note that his number is 0724 732 466 and NOT 0472 732 466. The Pilg eats humble pie yet again and begs forgiveness.

The Hobbit, Subsunk, Message from Andromeda, Red Moon, Worm in Paradise, Wise & Fool of Arnold Blackwood, Brawn Free, Trial of Arnold Blackwood, Gremlins
Mrs Pat Winstanley, 13 Hollington Way, Wigan, WN3 6LS

Mindshadow, Message from Andromeda
Len James, 37 Northway, Lymm, Cheshire, WA13 9AT

Quite a bundle of listings this month. Some of them will help you print out the vocabularies of various games – others will enable frustrated disc owners to transfer from tape to disc. I've also included a new *Red Moon* transfer listing, since readers had difficulties with the one previously printed.

Courtesy of Adam Milner of Godalming, here are three shortprograms that will enable you to print out some useful words and phrases from *Fantasia Diamond, Red Moon, Return to Eden*, and *Classic Adventure*:

Fantasia Diamond

```
10 MEMORY &4000: LOAD "F"
20 POKE &98C1,&C9
30 CALL &9858
40 FOR A = &8090 TO &9000
50 IF PEEK(A)>31 THEN PRINT CHR$(PEEK(A)): ELSE PRINT " ";
60 NEXT
```

Red Moon/Return to Eden

```
10 MEMORY &2FFF
20 LOAD "BIT 1" 'REM - FOR RED MOON. FOR RTE LOAD "FIRST
BIT"
30 FOR A = &4800 TO &4F61 'REM FOR RED MOON. RTE A = &3362
TO &399D
40 IF PEEK(A)>90 OR PEEK(A)<65 THEN GOTO 70
50 PRINT CHR$(PEEK(A));
60 NEXT
65 END
70 IF PEEK(A)>218 OR PEEK(A)<193 THEN PRINT " ";: GOTO 60 ELSE
PRINT CHR$(PEEK(A)-128);: GOTO 60
```

Classic Adventure

```
10 OPENOUT "!d"
20 MEMORY &11FF
30 CLOSEOUT
40 LOAD "ADV"
50 FOR A = &1200 TO &7881
60 IF PEEK(A)>64 AND PEEK(A)<123 THEN PRINT CHR$(PEEK(A));:
GOTO 90
70 IF PEEK(A)>224 AND PEEK(A)<251 THEN PRINT CHR$(PEEK(A)-
128);: GOTO 90
80 PRINT " ";
90 NEXT
```

Now three utilities for disc owners. These are each divided into two separate programs. You should type in and run the first program, which will transfer the data files from tape to disc. The second program in each case should be typed in exactly as shown and then saved to the disc on which you have saved the data files. This second program acts as a 'loading routine' that will run the adventure from disc. You can give the loading routine any name you like when you save it, and thereafter run the game by typing RUN "filename".

Colossal Adventure
Program 1

```
10 REM transfer 'Colossal Adventure' (LEVEL NINE) from tape to Disc
20 MEMORY &1FFF
30 |TAPE.IN: |DISC.OUT
40 LOAD"Adventure",&2000
50 SAVE"Colossal",b,&2000,&787F
```

Program 2

```
10 REM LOAD COLOSSAL FROM DISC
20 MODE 1
30 PRINT"Loading..... Please wait"
40 MEMORY &1FF0
50 LOAD"colossal",&2000
60 FOR a = &1FF1 TO &1FFE
70 READ a$
80 b = VAL("&" + a$)
90 POKE a,b
100 NEXT
110 |TAPE
120 CALL &1FF1
130 DATA 21,7F,9B,11,7F,AB,01
140 DATA 80,7B,ED,B8,C3,00,30
```

How to Become a Lord...

Go on! Give it a try! Offering help to those less fortunate than yourself is a great way of making new friends around the world. All you have to do is write (on a postcard please) to The Pilgrim, c/o Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7PS, stating clearly which games you have completed. Don't forget to include your name and address. You can also give a telephone number if you wish, but bear in mind that you may receive many calls, so check first with other members of your household before going ahead.

PØKES

Return to Eden

Program 1

```
10 REM Return to Eden copier – transfers data from tape to disc
20 |TAPE.IN: |DISC.OUT
30 MEMORY &306F
40 LOAD"first bit",&3070
50 SAVE"firstbit",b,&3070,&628F
60 LOAD"last bit",&5E18
70 SAVE"midbit",b,&5E18,&1000
80 SAVE"lastbit",b,&6E18,&34FF
```

Program 2

```
10 REM LOAD RETURN TO EDEN FROM DISC
20 MODE 1:PRINT"Return to Eden is Loading":PRINT:PRINT"The
computer has not crashed!"
30 MEMORY &1FFF
40 LOAD"firstbit",&3070
50 LOAD"midbit",&9200
60 FOR a=&FFC0 TO &FFF4
70 READ a$
80 b=VAL("&"+a$)
90 POKE a,b
100 NEXT
110 CALL &FFC0
120 |TAPE
130 CALL &FFDC
140 DATA 06,07,11,00,20,21,05,FF
150 DATA CD,77,BC,21,00,C0,CD,83
160 DATA BC,CD,7A,BC,C9,4C,41,53
170 DATA 54,42,49,54,21,70,30,11
180 DATA 70,00,01,90,71,ED,B0,21
190 DATA 00,C0,11,00,72,01,FF,34
200 DATA ED,B0,C3,00,BB
```

The Hobbit

Program 1

```
10 REM HOBBIT tape to disc copier
20 GOSUB 150
30 MODE 1
40 PRINT:PRINT"Wind tape to begining of HOBBIT 1"
50 PRINT"Missing out the loader program HOBBIT"
60 PRINT:PRINT"This is fully automatic"
70 PRINT:PRINT"Press PLAY then any key:"
80 CALL &BB18
90 MODE 0
100 INK 0,4:INK 1,0:INK 2,8:INK 3,25:INK 4,26:INK 5,12:INK 6,3:INK
7,14:INK 8,7:INK 9,6:INK 10,24:INK 11,12:INK 12,18:INK 13,15:INK
14,23:INK 15,26
110 |TAPE.IN: |DISC.OUT
120 CALL &A58C
130 PRINT"Copying finished"
140 END
150 REM hexloader
160 OPENOUT "dummy":MEMORY &FFF:CLOSEOUT
170 addr=&A58C
180 FOR lineno=10000 TO 10160 STEP 10
190 tot=0
200 FOR a=1 TO 8
210 READ byte$
220 num=VAL("&"+byte$)
230 POKE addr,num
240 addr=addr+1
250 tot=tot+num
260 NEXT
270 READ check
280 IF tot<>check THEN PRINT"Checksum error in line
";lineno:STOP
290 NEXT
300 RETURN
10000 DATA 3E,FF,CD,6B,BC,06,08,21,864
10010 DATA F2,A5,11,00,80,CD,77,BC,1064
10020 DATA 21,00,C0,CD,83,BC,CD,7A,1076
10030 DATA BC,06,07,21,FA,A5,11,00,666
10040 DATA 80,CD,8C,BC,21,00,C0,11,903
10050 DATA 00,40,01,00,00,3E,02,CD,334
10060 DATA 98,BC,CD,8F,BC,06,08,21,923
10070 DATA 01,A6,11,00,80,CD,77,BC,824
10080 DATA 21,00,10,CD,83,BC,CD,7A,900
10090 DATA BC,06,07,21,09,A6,11,00,426
10100 DATA C0,CD,8C,BC,21,00,10,11,791
10110 DATA 88,95,01,00,00,3E,02,CD,558
10120 DATA 98,BC,CD,8F,BC,C9,48,4F,1228
10130 DATA 42,42,49,54,20,31,48,4F,521
10140 DATA 42,42,49,54,31,48,4F,42,555
10150 DATA 42,49,54,20,32,48,4F,42,522
10160 DATA 42,49,54,32,00,00,00,00,273
```

Program 2

```
10 REM hobbit loader
20 MODE 0:BORDER 26
30 INK 0,4:INK 1,0:INK 2,8:INK 3,25:INK 4,16:INK 5,12:INK 6,3:INK
7,14:INK 8,7:INK 9,6:INK 10,24:INK 11,11:INK 12,18:INK 13,15:INK
14,23:INK 15,26
40 OPENOUT "d":MEMORY &FFF:CLOSEOUT
50 LOAD"hobbit1",&C000
60 LOAD"hobbit2",&1000
70 |TAPE
80 CALL &7BF0
```



Clue Sniffing with the Pilg

Forget the clue sniffing, my weary travellers – this month we've given you a real bumper SNORT! There are so many clues in this issue's pot that I expect even the most hardened sniffer will feel a little dizzy at the prospect. So, if you're still having trouble in that accursed game you got for Christmas, now's your chance to get yourself up and onto the right track...

COLOSSAL ADVENTURE
Those skeletons need perking up. Try dropping something on them.

FANTASIA DIAMOND
Don't cross water.
Polishing a glass could have shattering consequences.
Put battery into the toy robot.

DUNGEON ADVENTURE
Drop the fruit onto outsize passers-by
Dice with death with the Rakshasa
Wear the Helmet before entering Exit

ERIK THE VIKING
Empty the stewpot
Tie a yellow ribbon round the Big Bad Wolf!
Rub the boomerang for fast returns
Take the blade for fun, but not much else

THE BEER HUNTER
Wakey! Wakey!
Real men don't eat quiche
Gamble to go up in the world and pervert the course of justice.

THE HOBBIT
Open all in Beorn's house
Throw rope across river, then pull it
Gandalf may be able to kill the butler if you can't
Wait twice between wests to get past the pale bulbous eyes

LORD OF THE RINGS – thanks to Paul Nicholls of Hoddesden and Bilbo Baggins of Tottenham

Become all characters – it's easier
No need for a candle under the hedge – just keep striking matches
Don't look for elf-stone in the old willow - just TAKE JEWEL (there's a bug here)
Black riders will ignore Frodo if he's not carrying the ring

GREMLINS
Unplug the pool
Examine the drawer twice for knife and spark igniter
Weld the snowplough

MINDSHADOW
Get the debris with the pole
The Hotel Clerk knows a bit about rooms
Cleave that chain
Dig with that shell
Keep a close eye on your drink

WARLORD
Into the ring in the Crystal Cavern
Fire the pot in the Fomorian's cavern
Silence is golden if you've got the Amulet
Search the camp for Druid Fodder
Straw is for jumping on

EMERALD ISLE
Don't bother with the Runes
The Spider likes to stick around – throw him a present from the east
Drop anchor before taking the plunge
Union Carbide – good for lamps

Red Hot Top Ten!

Here are this month's most popular games, as decided by your votes. Don't forget, Pilgs, that everyone who sends in the voting coupon is entered into our monthly draw, and the winner receives the adventure of his or her choice absolutely FREE!

Anyway, here are this month's votes. *Red Moon* seems to be riding high at the moment – the Pilg remembers saying in the first issue of Amstrad Action that this game looked like being a winner and for once he's been proved right. *Lord of The Rings* has also regained an honourable position – I expect now that everyone has worked out which bugs to avoid they can get on with playing the game.

Make sure you get your votes in as soon as possible for next month. Oh – and just a word about the free game. It MUST be an adventure release. After all, this is an adventure chart, and if you want to win arcade games you'll find that there's no shortage of opportunities elsewhere in the mag. And anyway, what better prize than a whole world to go exploring in?

1 Red Moon	**Level 9**
2 Lord of the Rings	**Melbourne House**
3 Never Ending Story	**Never Ending Story**
4 Return to Eden	**Return to Eden**
5 Worm in Paradise	**Level 9**
6 Zork I	**Infocom**
7 Mindshadow	**Activision**
8 Warlord	**Interceptor**
8 Emerald Isle	**Level 9**
10 The Hobbit	**Melbourne House**

This month's lucky Pilgrim...

My goodness, I'm not sure the Pilg can afford the postage on this one! This month it's Jaehee Lee from Holland who walks away with the free game of his choice. Jaehee has chosen Level 9's *Worm in Paradise* – an excellent choice, if the Pilg may be allowed to comment. Good luck with the Eden transportation system, Jaehee –you'll need it!

To The Pilgrim.

My favourite three adventures are

1. Game: ______________________

Company: ______________________

2. Game: ______________________

Company: ______________________

3. Game: ______________________

Company: ______________________

My reasons for putting game number one above as first choice are:

If I'm a lucky Pilgrim and win a free game, I should like to receive a copy of:

My address is (BLOCK CAPITALS ONLY):

It's a Winner!

The Pilg reports on the AA/Incentive write-your-own-adventure competition

Somewhere in Harrogate there's a young lad named **Nicholas Purser**who just might end up being an adventure software star. Nicholas's entry topped the bill in our Write-Your-Own-Adventure competition, run with Incentive Software, and now Incentive are hoping that they will be able to release an adventure based on Nicholas's ideas this year. And, of course, in addition to the royalties that may come from the game, the lucky lad gets a free disc drive and ten blank discs!

But that's not all! There were five runners-up, each of whom receives either two blank discs or ten blank cassettes. And all the entries submitted have been forwarded to Incentive, who will consider the runners-up also for possible publication.

The entries were of an almost unbelievably high standard, and both the Pilg and Ian Andrew of Incentive Software found it very hard to pick the lucky winners. In the end, we chose Nicholas' entry because it was both highly original (apart from the title!) and seemed to offer a number of opportunities for amusing gameplay and original situations. Unlike many other entries, it did not rely on the rather too-well-worn themes of science fiction, shock, and horror for its effect, and at the same time encompassed a number of different styles of play (e.g. fighting, feeding, and finding as well as interaction with human beings and animals).

Here is an extract from Nicholas' entry, together with extracts from the five runners-up, each of whom submitted game ideas of tremendous quality and ingenuity.

Felix the Cat

You play the part of a cat who is looking for a book on cats so he can find out about himself.

The playing area consists of three main parts: a house of about sixteen locations (some rooms have two parts); a garden (outside the house, through a cat-door) in which you must defeat other cats to gain your domain; the housing estate outside the front gate. The estate is a maze. In it you may find valuable items such as watches and jewellery. If you take these home you get two cat treats. You may also get attacked by other cats or chased by dogs which you can outrun, but you get lost.

The main characters in the game are the big people who are found in the house or sometimes in the garden. If you have found items they can help you by feeding you extras, which helps your energy for fights. They cause problems as well. Sometimes they accidentally shut you in rooms or in cupboards. They also move the book on cats around the house which can hinder your progress.

You can only win the game if you get the people to help you as you need them to lift you onto shelves to get the book at the end.

Sometimes the people will abandon you to the RSPCA, which is equal to losing. The only other way to die is to get killed in a fight.

The runners-up...

Karl Larsson of Bromley, Kent:

'...locked inside a ten storey building, which is a toy shop. Everything would be fine except that you are only two inches tall and have to find a way out before the store opens at 9am the next morning...'

David S Rhydderch of Basingstoke, Hants:

'...a computer salesman for Jappon Universal Micro & Peripherals (JUMP), a very aggressive market leader known to reward success but also to remove non-performers without any delay. Your objective is to get rich and retire, the quicker the better.'

Miss T Salmon of Watton-At-Stone, Herts

'...The sun is losing its power and the planet Earth is slowly dying. The last 1000 sq km of unspoilt ground contains ten animals, the last left alive. High Command has decreed that you must round them up...'

Ken Walton of Bolton-le-Sands, Carnforth:

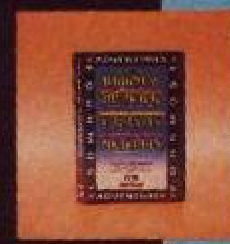
A very complex scenario involving a far-off planet, the Gessavrans, hibernation caverns, and a broken-down spaceship.

Philip Bowden of Hillingdon, Middx:

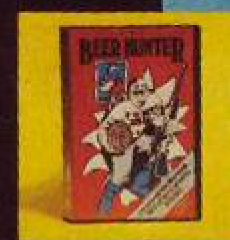
'The aim of the adventure is to survive a mid-air hi-jack, which may end in many ways from a mid-air explosion to the best possible end of no deaths and the hi-jackers' capture.'

Congratulations to all who took part. Prizes will be despatched as soon as possible and should have reached the winners by the time this issue hits the streets.

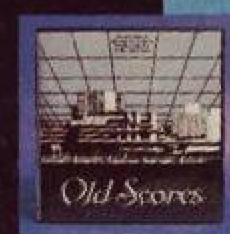
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THE BEER HUNTER!



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Amstrad £7.95 Spectrum £6.95

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THE AMSTRAD REVOLUTION

Even before Alan Sugar's sensational takeover of Sinclair, the Amstrad computers were making waves. We persuaded former Amstrad Action editor PETER CONNOR to crawl out of retirement and look back at how the Amstrad scene has changed during the nine months of AA's existence.

Although the first issue of Amstrad Action carried the date-line October 1985 on its cover, work began in earnest on it at the very beginning of August. It proved to be a particularly good month to start. On one single, fateful day – August 20th – Alan Sugar gave birth to the CPC 6128, the PCW 8256 and murdered the CPC 664. All three events have had a great influence on the Amstrad world, and their repercussions are still being felt.

When AA was conceived Amstrad computing meant the 464 and the 664, the latter of these two having been the first cheap micro with built-in disk-drive. We all thought it was a terrific bargain as well as a standard that would prevail for quite some time to come. Amstrad themselves had pledged faith to it, claiming pretty strenuously that it was here to stay and that the 6128 was for American consumption only for the foreseeable future.

Well, the swanky August press launch – compered by BBC newsreader Richard Whitmore – changed all that. Amstrad had seen that cheaper component prices meant they could clean up in Britain with a 128K micro that would cost as little as the earlier 64K version. They'd also seen a hole in the market waiting to be very profitably filled by a low-cost word-processor-cum-computer. They duly filled it with Joyce.

In the excitement surrounding these two new machines – and make no mistake, they *were* exciting – poor old 664 owners were virtually forgotten. Amstrad appeared to have completely underestimated the feelings of bitterness and betrayal felt by those who'd bought the machine in the belief that it would remain the standard for some time to come. As a stream of letters in ReAction has shown, people are none too pleased.

You can certainly see their point. Imagine buying a 664 just before the launch of the 6128 and then seeing it made obsolete overnight by a computer with 64K more memory and CP/M Plus – and a lower price tag. Imagine then remembering all the brave words about continued support from Amstrad. A bit of a sickener, to say the least.

The problem, of course, was that few people had the right idea about Amstrad as a company. Alan Sugar is hard-headed rather than egg-headed: he's no boffin like Sinclair, constantly in a tizzy about technological developments. Computers, for Amstrad, are just another profitable line of product. If they thought they weren't going to sell next year they'd drop the lot and make something else.

So Amstrad may not have won many friends among those who had bought 664s, but they made many more by selling so many 6128s and 8256s so cheaply. In marketing terms they did absolutely the right thing in providing slightly outmoded computer technology at a price that Alan Sugar's famous 'truck driver' could afford.

If you don't believe me just take a look a Amstrad's balance sheet. Profits of £20m were obtained for the year ending last June. But the two new machines led to a massive rise by the end of the year – in that six months alone the company made over £27m and Alan Sugar was now worth, on paper at least, approaching £200 million With figures like that, who's going to worry about a few thousand disgruntled 664 owners?

The success of the 6128, though, has been surpassed by that of the PCW 8256. Most analysts agree that Joyce is largely resposible for those juicy profits, and Amstrad are obviously looking for more with the release of the PCW 8512, another advance that hasn't pleased some of those who bought the predecessor.

It all looks as though Amstrad are now going single-mindedly for the business computing market, especially when you consider that the Amstrad IBM PC clone is not far from release. That's where the mega-bucks are, and where the mega-bucks are is where Amstrad want to be.

Quite where that leaves Amstrad in terms of home computing is anyone's guess. My own, for what it's worth, is that no new home machines – i.e. computers you can use for both games and applications – will be launched by them for quite some time. Amstrad will wait and see what becomes of the 68000 processor-based machines, such as the Atari ST and the Amiga. If it looks as though there is substantial demand for them, they will get to work on their own, much cheaper, versions.

In the meantime the existing CPC range will continue to be well supported, not so much by Amstrad but by the independent producers of software and peripherals. There's a huge user base, not just in the UK but in Europe as well, and this is sure to grow substantially until someone can persuade me, you and the rest of the world that there's a better and more versatile home computer than the Amstrad.

AA – the issues at stake

When I pick up a copy of Amstrad Action Issue 1 these days I feel a curious mixture of pride and embarassment: pride that we ever got the thing out at all, embarassment because it now strikes me as an almost amateurish effort. A monster's eye on the cover was one thing; having the whole head on page 3 was just a little excessive.

The actual content, though, was just what the doctor ordered. *Amsyclopedia* was a huge and invaluable guide to just about every Amstrad game known to man, and testimony to Bob Wade's powers of judgement and stamina.

The unfortunately-named *Biz Progs* – quickly changed by deed poll to *Serious Software* – contained a guide to word processors that set the standard for AA's clear, exhaustive and fair comparisons of applications software. We actually called that feature 'Which Wrod-processor?', a joke that misfired





somewhat encouraged by the number of typographical errors in the rest of the magazine several readers took us to task for making a terrible mistake in a 72 point bold headline. Lots of features in the mag died a pretty sudden death.

Who now remembers Blurb Writer? (He was the fellow who was supposed to write all the blurbs, competitions etc.) Has anyone ever won the flagon of cider for the best 'Biz Tips'?

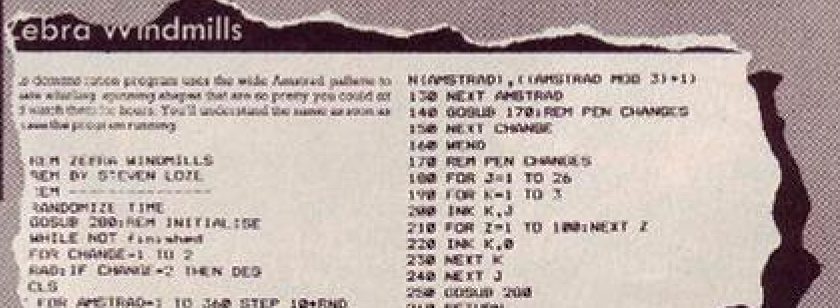
One character who has lasted is the crittur in the margin, Toot. Some of you wanted to bloot the Toot. Some of you wanted to hoot the Toot. Some of you didn't care one way or the other about the Toot. But overall the response seemed to be that his irreverent presence put things in perspective and stopped us taking things too seriously. Toot stayed.



On the cover of that first issue was a flash to the effect that Amstrad Action is not an official publication. Originally that was forced on us by Amstrad who had threatened to sue us for passing off as one of their products! Now we wouldn't remove it if we could – it makes the point that we're not related to Amstrad the company or any other company producing equipment for Amstrad computers. Our independence ensures our fairness. Amstrad User clearly don't see this argument because they've since adopted the cover line 'The OFFICIAL Amstrad magazine'! It'll be interesting to see which line is more effective. **Issue 2** had a much classier feel to it, and also contained some truly classy games in Action Test. That month's Mastergame was *Highway Encounter* – still, to my mind, one of the best things around for Arnold. The cover feature told you how to plug yourself in to the communications revolution, but I wonder how many of you did?



By **Issue 3** we'd introduced type-in listings – by popular demand. It wasn't quite an overwhelming cry for listings, but at least half of you strongly wanted them, while nowhere near as many strongly objected. So in they came, and I think they've satisfied those who like them without annoying those who don't. And it was all because your response to the questionnaires we'd printed had given us some good leads on what you wanted. The cover of that issue proclaimed our exclusive preview of *Elite*, the game everyone had been waiting for. There were times when we wished we hadn't bothered – the saga of how the preview cassette almost didn't get here from Edinburgh is even now too painful to recount.



ebra windmills

```
REM ZEBRA WINDMILLS
REM BY STEVEN LOZE
REM ----------------
RANDOMIZE TIME
GOSUB 200:REM INITIALISE
WHILE NOT finished
FOR CHANGE=1 TO 2
RAD:IF CHANGE=2 THEN DEG
CLS
FOR AMSTRAD=1 TO 360 STEP 10*RND
PLOT 320 ...
N(AMSTRAD),((AMSTRAD MOD 3)+1)
130 NEXT AMSTRAD
140 GOSUB 170:REM PEN CHANGES
150 NEXT CHANGE
160 WEND
170 REM PEN CHANGES
180 FOR J=1 TO 26
190 FOR K=1 TO 3
200 INK K,J
210 FOR Z=1 TO 100:NEXT Z
220 INK K,0
230 NEXT K
240 NEXT J
250 GOSUB 200
260 RETURN
```

Issue 4 began the noble AA tradition of corking free cover cassettes – for an extra 50p. Work that out if you can. It was an overwhelming success, which is why we did it again on the last issue. The 1986 Diary was supposed to be light-hearted, but its predictions of Amstrad profits weren't too far of the mark. We also had a board game – *Money, Money, Money* – which took us a long, long time to produce. Hardly anybody played it. Just goes to show that what pleases the producer doesn't always please the reader. The Pilgrim reviewed several adventure generators in that Christmas issue, an article which led to some strange goings on. The Pilgrim was critical of *Genesis*, a program produced by Camel Micros of Exeter. We were a bit worried about the Pilg's judgement when three letters arrived saying he was completely wrong, the *Genesis* was ace etc., etc., Until we noticed that all three letters were posted from the same south-western area, all three bore bogus addresses, all three had remarkably similar handwriting... **Issue 5** was distinguished by the super quality of games software reviewed, so good that we put pictures of six progs on the cover – *Elite*, *Sweevo's World* and *Barry McGuigan's Boxing* are all games that merit a place in anyone's software library.



That issue also saw the debut in our pages of Sugarman, the greatest exponent of computer justice the world has ever seen. It was a strip sent in by a reader on the off chance we might publish it: we liked it so much we asked for a series. And we're not the only ones who enjoy Sugarman's exploits – rumour has it that the strip is read at the *very highest* levels within Amstrad. Glad you like it, Alan.

Issue 6 saw another AA innovation – we started putting the Line-Up in colour. A big improvement that started the mag off with an even bigger bang. The great Bertram Carrot sorted out the database problem for you – no excuses if your filing system's still in a mess. We'd decided by then that our readers were a mixed and fairly adult bunch who didn't just want the latest news on games – although they wanted that as well. Our database survery was just one of many articles that tried to help you use your Amstrad to the utmost. However we tried to adopt an easier to understand approach than our competitors, who sometimes, as far as we could see, seemed to think their readers all had degrees in computing science.

Our growing awareness of the age of our readers also led to one or two minor design changes about the same time. After intense debate in the office, it was decided to drop the claw logo from the Action Test pages (along with mournful face in Serious Software and various others). Good riddance, I said, but there

wrod-
sor?


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Based on a concept by
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and story by Robin Waterfield
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Distributed
by U.S. Gold
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were those who mourned its passing. We also took the opportunity of using a bolder type-face for the main body-text. No one seems to have noticed, but hopefully the text is that much more readable now.

'Whacko!' screamed the cover of **Issue 7**, in which we gave Arnold's educational software a working over – a topic some of you had been demanding for quite some time.. Hands up those of who recognised Bob Wade as well as Alan Sugar in the cover illustration.

And then, to depart on a high note, the last issue had one of those AA cover gifts. The PSS software on it was really something a bit special – not just a whole free game, but terrific demos of terrific games, one of which was the month's runaway Mastergame.

Overall, then, in our humble view, AA has just got better and better – largely through your feedback. Your answers to our questionnaires have helped us to identify what you want as well as what you need. And your letters and playing tips have made ReAction and Cheat Mode two of the liveliest sections in the mag. Just keep sending the stuff in, and AA won't go far wrong.

CONNOR COMMENTS

On CP/M Plus

The arrival of the 6128 and the 8256, with the more powerful Plus version of CP/M, meant a great increase in computing power for the home user. The 464 and 664 had not exactly been mere toys, but they couldn't run the really big and powerful applications software. Suddenly, programs such as *Supercalc 2, Cardbox, Scratchpad Plus, Popular Accounts* were available – and at a sensible price.

This meant that you really could use a 6128 as a powerful business machine, as well as having a good old shoot-em-up when the strain got too much. Some of this business software needed a second drive to make it really work for you, but the same thing applied to the 8256 – and that didn't let you play games. For my money the 6128 was better value, even without a printer.

But where did it leave 464 and 664 owners? Outside in the cold, pressing their noses up against the sweetshop window. Until a ray of hope came in the form of a new range of add-ons, supplied first by DK Tronics and a little later by Screen Micros. Extra RAM, Silicon Discs, CP/M emulators – they all held out the hope of a swift upgrade to 6128 power.

Unfortunately, neither the DK Tronics boards nor the Vortex add-ons supplied by Screens seem yet to offer a true CP/M Plus upgrade. They'll give the 464 and 664 owner a massive increase in usable RAM, but they won't let him use those attractive applications programs. Both suppliers of expansion boards are promising future compatibility with CP/M Plus. But until it arrives, the 6128less are missing out.



CONNOR COMMENTS

CONNOR COMMENTS

On Games

A year ago you would have been hard pressed to find an Amstrad game which didn't have the name *Roland* in its title and which wasn't produced by Amsoft. You'd also have been hard pressed to find a game worth playing. Let's face it, Amsoft weren't really producing the goods.

Then, towards last summer, Virgin produced *Sorcery*, perhaps the first game to be better on the Amstrad than on the machine it was converted from. Amsoft got the idea and licensed *Sorcery Plus*, the first disk-based game and still one of the best.

By the autumn, as a glance at AA will show, games software was picking up. More games were being converted, and more of the conversions were first class. By Christmas we'd seen stacks of terrific games – *Marsport, Highway Encounter, Boulderdash, Strangeloop, Sweevo's World*, to name but a few.

Even more exciting, though, were the whispers of Amstrad originals – huge games, whose graphics and gameplay would grab you and never let you go. Then, early this year, we finally saw one of these fabled beasts – *Spindizzy*, from Electric Dreams. Not just an Amstrad first, but one of the most amazing games any of us at AA had ever seen anywhere on any format.

And the number of stunning Amstrad-first games has grown – *Yie Ar Kung Fu, Get Dexter* and *Batman* are just the start. Then there's the promise of massive disk-only games for the 6128...

On word processors

Last summer the best you could buy for the Amstrad was probably *Tasword 464/664*. We used it on AA to write and edit copy for typesetting. But it was a program with serious flaws for anyone, like us, with more than a letter to write. The main problem was the program had no true insert mode – so adding new text and then reformatting the document to fit it could prove extremely laborious. It almost drove me bonkers, and my sanity was saved only by the appearance of *Pocket WordStar*, a sawn-off version of the world's best-selling WP for the CPC machines. It wasn't exactly a snip at well over £100, but it was the kind of professional program we at AA needed.

Shortly afterwards, though, Tasman brought out *Tasword 6128* for the new machine. This did away with the drawbacks of earlier versions, and 6128 owners at least had a powerful and sophisticated WP for only £25. At about the same time the equally powerful *Protext* arrived. This program not only runs on all three CPC machines, it is also available on sideways ROM so you can have instant access to the software as well as leaving lots of K free for documents.

Neither of the two last-named programs was a serious rival to *WordStar* here at AA, for the simple reason that our typesetters set from disk using *WordStar* control codes. What did interest us, though, was *NewWord*, which was pretty much a *WordStar* clone with a couple of refinements – but cost £50 less. It also has an extensive spell-checker, a great boon to the illiterate (and typnig error-prone) journalist.

Well, we haven't changed to *NewWord*, partly because it needs a second drive to get the most out of it, mainly because we've already got *WordStar* and it's doing us quite nicely thankyou. But *NewWord's* arrival exemplifies a number of important points about the serious side of the Amstrad software market.

First, it shows that the big companies with the big programs at big prices aren't going to have it all their own way. Competition is bringing prices down to sensible levels – I'd be very surprised if *WordStar* itself didn't soon drop to around £50.

Secondly, you can see that the problem these days is not getting the program for your needs, but choosing the *right* one from the range available. Which, I hope, is where mags like AA come in. Anyone wanting a spreadsheet, database or word processor in the past few months could have done much worse than keep an eye on us for advice.



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PART 2

THE STORY SO FAR

Last issue, we saw how you can give Arnold instructions to clear the screen, print up pieces of text and change the screen mode. We also saw the way that simple instructions like CLS, PRINT or MODE can be joined together with colons, so that Arnold performs them together.

This month, as promised, we'll be looking at simple graphics instructions. Also we'll be moving on from instructions to programs. First, though, an explanation of something that may have confused you in last month's article.

On computers in general, the key you press to mark the end of an instruction is called the RETURN key. It is actually labelled RETURN on the 6128, but on the 464 and 664 it's the larger of the two keys marked ENTER. I hope this didn't confuse too many of you last time. Remember that you have to press this key after each typed instruction below.

BEFORE YOU START

Sometimes, especially when you're working with graphics, you can get Arnold in such a state that you just can't give him instructions properly. Maybe you can't see what you're typing because of the way you've altered the screen colours – this often happens. If you do get in this kind of fix, and you just can't get out of it, you *can* simply switch Arnold off and then on again. This will certainly get you out of the fix, but it's a bit drastic.

A better answer, in most cases, is to *reset* the computer. To do this, press the control (CTRL) and shift keys together and, still holding these down, press the escape (ESC) key. This will give you the same start-up message as if you had just switched on. If you follow these reset instructions properly and fail to get the start-up message, you have got a *crash* or *lock-up* on your hands. Here, you will need to switch Arnold off.

PEN AND PAPER

The graphic effects which Arnold can produce depend very much on which of three MODEs (0, 1 or 2) he's in. When you first switch on, he's in MODE 1. As we saw last time, this gives you 40 characters to each screen row. It also gives you up to 4 different colours on the screen at once. You can only see two of them at first, blue and bright yellow. It's easy enough to get at the other two available colours, though. Type...

```
PEN 2
```

If Arnold understood this, he'll now be writing everything in bright cyan – a sky blue colour. If he didn't understand it, you probably forgot the space in between "PEN" and "2". On a green-screen you should be able to see the change, but it's hardly spectacular. Try...

```
PEN 3
```

...instead. This turns the letters bright red in colour, (very dark on a green-screen). Now we've got a total of four colours on screen, the maximum available in MODE 1.

So as you can see, to change the colour of the text, you simply use the PEN command followed by a single number. The number (which, as we saw last time is called an 'operand') simply selects one of the available colours. In this case, because we are in Mode 1, the number should be in the range 0-3 – 0 gives blue text, 1 bright yellow and we've just seen 2 and 3 in action.

If you were to switch on and immediately type PEN 0, you'd have blue text on a blue background. That would mean that you couldn't read anything Arnold displayed – and that would make life very difficult. Of course you could read blue text if it was on some different coloured background. Type...

```
PAPER 3:PEN 0
```

...remembering the spaces after "PAPER" and "PEN". You should now have blue text against a red background. Notice that PAPER doesn't change the background of the whole screen – just the little square of background behind each character. If you want to change the whole background, type CLS.

Apart from that, PAPER works the same way as PEN. The number following it selects that colour as the new background. Try experimenting with these commands. You might even find a combination of pen and paper colours that's easier to read!

THE INK COMMAND

So far we've been talking about MODE 1 which gives you 40 characters to the row, and up to 4 colours on the screen at any one time. MODE 0 offers 20 characters per line in up to 16 colours, while MODE 2 gives you 80 characters to the row, but only two colours.

As you can see, even MODE 0 only lets you use 16 colours at any one time. You may think this doesn't match up with the Amstrad adverts which said you could get 27 colours. Don't worry – you haven't been conned. Arnold *can* display 27 different colours, but not all at the same time. You can only use 16 colours at once in MODE 0, but you can choose *which* 16 you want out of the full 27 that Arnold can produce.

Likewise, you can choose 4 out of 27 for MODE 1, or 2 out of 27 for MODE 2. Try doing this. Reset the computer, and type...

```
INK 0,9
```

...making sure you put in the space after "INK". This should leave you with the screen background coloured green instead of blue. On a green-screen it's just a paler green than it was before, but the change is still perfectly visible. Unlike PAPER, it affects the whole screen immediately.

As you can see, INK is a powerful command but what exactly does it do? Well, you use it to *replace* one of the existing



colours available to you with another colour. Let's get our terminology right. If a colour is *currently available for use* on screen by commands like PEN and PAPER, it is said to be an *ink*. The number used to get at the colour – the number you use with the commands PEN and PAPER – is called its *ink-number*.

Thus when the computer is first switched on ink no. 0 is blue. If you want to use a new colour – a colour not available when Arnold is switched on – you use the INK command. With INK you can tell Arnold that, for instance, you want green as the new ink 0, in place of blue. This is, in fact, exactly what the example above did.

The INK command must be followed by TWO numbers (operands). In our example, the first number was 0. This tells Arnold that it is ink 0 which is being replaced.

Now reset the computer – see the start of the article, if you don't know how to do this – and type...

```
INK 1,9
```

...remembering the spaces as before. This time, you'll notice, the text has turned green (or just darker, on a green screen) while the background stays the same colour. The difference is in the first number after the word "INK" – the first operand. This time it is telling Arnold that it is ink 1 (initially bright yellow) which is to be replaced.

SELECTING COLOURS

But how does the computer know what the new colour should be? This is what the second operand is for. It can be any number between 0 and 26, according to which of Amstrad's 27 colours you want to use. In our example, the second operand was the number 9, and this means green. Try out some other numbers for yourself.

A chart of colours and their corresponding colour-numbers is set out in Table 1, and 664/6128 owners will find the same information in the "Master Colour Chart" on the top of their disc drives. Thus, INK 0,17 would turn the screen background pastel magenta. Green screen owners have a much easier time of it, and won't need the chart at all. For them, different colour numbers mean different shades of green – the higher the number, the lighter the shade, so that 0 is the darkest and 26 is the lightest.

We now know that INK needs two operands. The first tells Arnold which ink you want to replace, and the second tells him what colour you want to replace it with. *Do not confuse these two numbers.* The first is an ink-number. It's got to be in the range 0-3 in MODE 1, 0-15 in MODE 0 and can only be 0 or 1 in MODE 2. The second, on the other hand, is a **colour-number**. It should be in the range 0-26, and this does not vary between modes.

If you *do* find this confusing, you can think of the analogy suggested by the commands themselves. Imagine you have a range of ink-pots available (four in Mode 1 numbered 0-3). When you first switch on the computer they are filled with blue, yellow, cyan and red coloured ink. Using this picture, the command PEN 2 means to use whatever ink there is in the pot numbered 2. While the command INK 2,9 means to replace the ink in ink-pot number 2 with colour number 9 (green).

Unfortunately you can't take the analogy too far, because putting green ink in ink-pot number 2 not only means that PEN 2 will now produce green text, it also means that anything on the screen which was produced from ink-pot 2 will also instantly turn green. Otherwise you could end up with more than the permitted four colours on screen.

The important thing is to understand the difference between a colour's number (0-26) which is fixed, and the ink-number which can temporarily be assigned to it for use by the PEN and PAPER commands.

INK-PEN SUMMARY

At this point a quick summary seems in order, so here goes. PEN changes the colour that Arnold prints new text up in, and PAPER changes the background colour that the text is printed on. They each need one operand, specifying which of the currently available colours – the inks – you want to change to.

Arnold can display 27 different colours, but not all at once. Depending on the screen mode, you can have a maximum of 16 different colours on screen at any one time. You can select which of the 27 colours you have available to you. You use the INK command to make this selection, and colours you've chosen like this are called inks.

WHAT A PROGRAM IS

We've reached the point where compound commands are a bit limiting. For one thing, you can only have 255 characters to a compound command. For another, no matter how often you use a command you have to retype the whole thing every time. Suppose, for example, that you often want to change to MODE 0 and select inks 0-15. You could do this with a compound command – something like MODE 0:INK 0,4:INK 1,22:INK 2,..etc. To type all this and then get a "Syntax error" is very frustrating. What's more, the MODE command will clear the screen, so you can't even look at what you typed to see where you went wrong.

The answer is to write a program to do the job. Here's how.First reset the machine – this is covered at the start of the article. Then type in this example.

```
10 MODE 2:INK 0,4:INK 1,18
```

You'll find that Arnold does...nothing at all. Type LIST, and he'll display an exact copy of the line you typed in – except that it'll be in capitals even if you typed it in lower case. He hasn't obeyed the commands there, though. That's because, when you type in a number followed by a command or compound command – without pressing return between the two – Arnold treats it as something to be stored, and only obeyed later. When you want Arnold to obey the commands, type RUN and he'll treat them as if you'd just typed them in. Try it.

What you have typed in is a *program*. It is a series of commands stored away, and obeyed some time after typing in. All this program does is put you into mode 2 and set the text bright green against a magenta background. But you can see one advantage immediately. Switch the screen to MODE 1 (just type in that command), and change ink 0 to black. You should be able to work out how to do this for yourself, from the above section on inks and colours and from the information in Table 1. Now to switch back to bright green on magenta all you have to do is RUN the program again. There's no need to laboriously retype the instructions.

Most programs are much more complex than this one, but they are all just sequences of commands. Up till now, Arnold has obeyed all the commands we've given him as soon as we've pressed return. Commands given in that way are called **direct** or **immediate** commands. This is to distinguish them from commands which are part of a program, and therefore are not obeyed until you type RUN.

You may be wondering what the significance is of the number 10 you typed at the start of your one-line program. In fact any other number there would have produced the same result. But, as we'll see next time, line numbers have an important role to play in programs longer than a single line.

NEXT ISSUE

Next month, armed with an understanding of colours and inks, we'll be venturing into the world of DRAWing and PLOTting. On the programs side of things, we'll be dealing with lines, line numbers and editing.

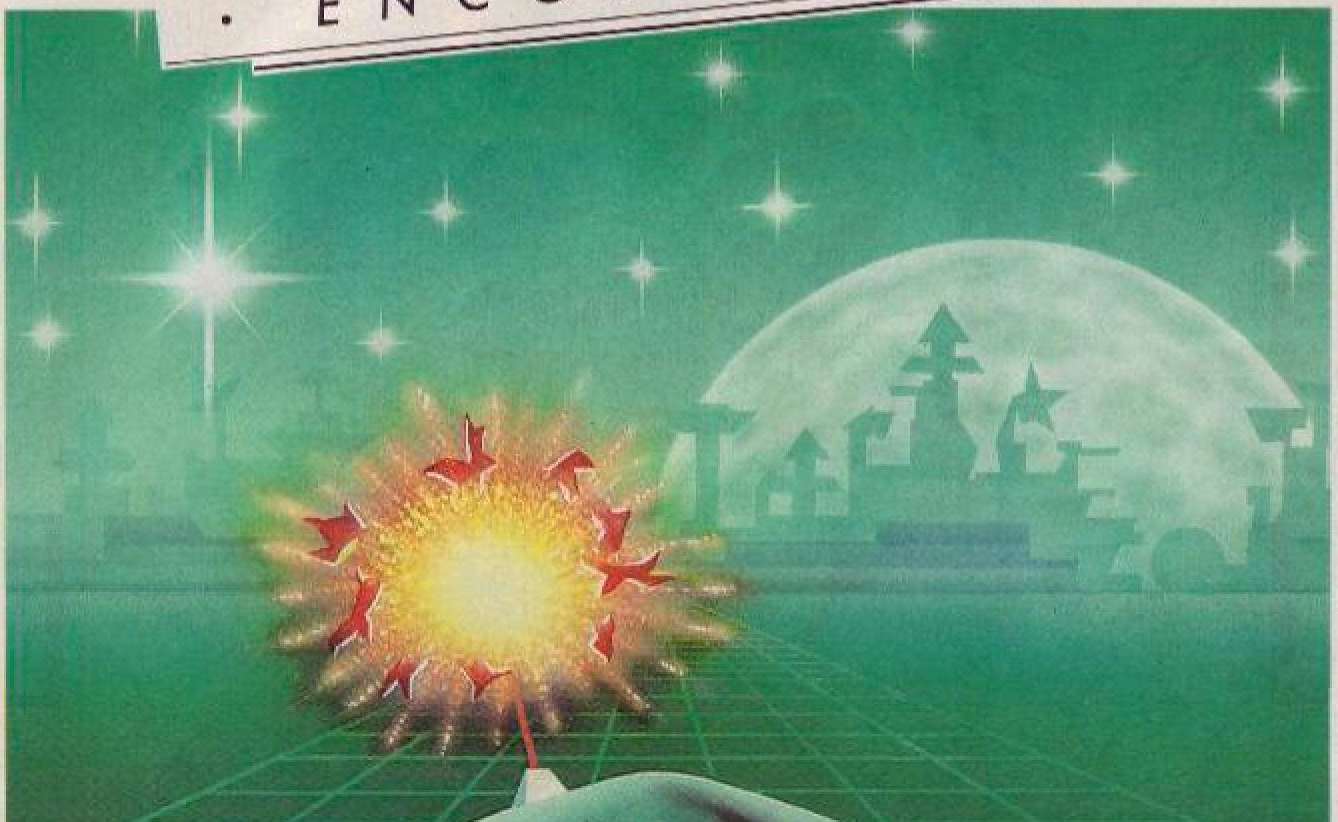
In the meantime, experiment

COLOUR NUMBERS

0 Black	10 Cyan	19 Sea Green
1 Blue	11 Sky Blue	20 Bright Cyan
2 Bright Blue	12 Yellow	21 Lime Green
3 Red	13 White	22 Pastel Green
4 Magenta	14 Pastel Blue	23 Pastel Cyan
5 Mauve	15 Orange	24 Bright Yellow
6 Bright Red	16 Pink	25 Pastel Yellow
7 Purple	17 Pastel Magenta	26 Bright White
8 Bright Magenta	18 Bright Green	
9 Green		

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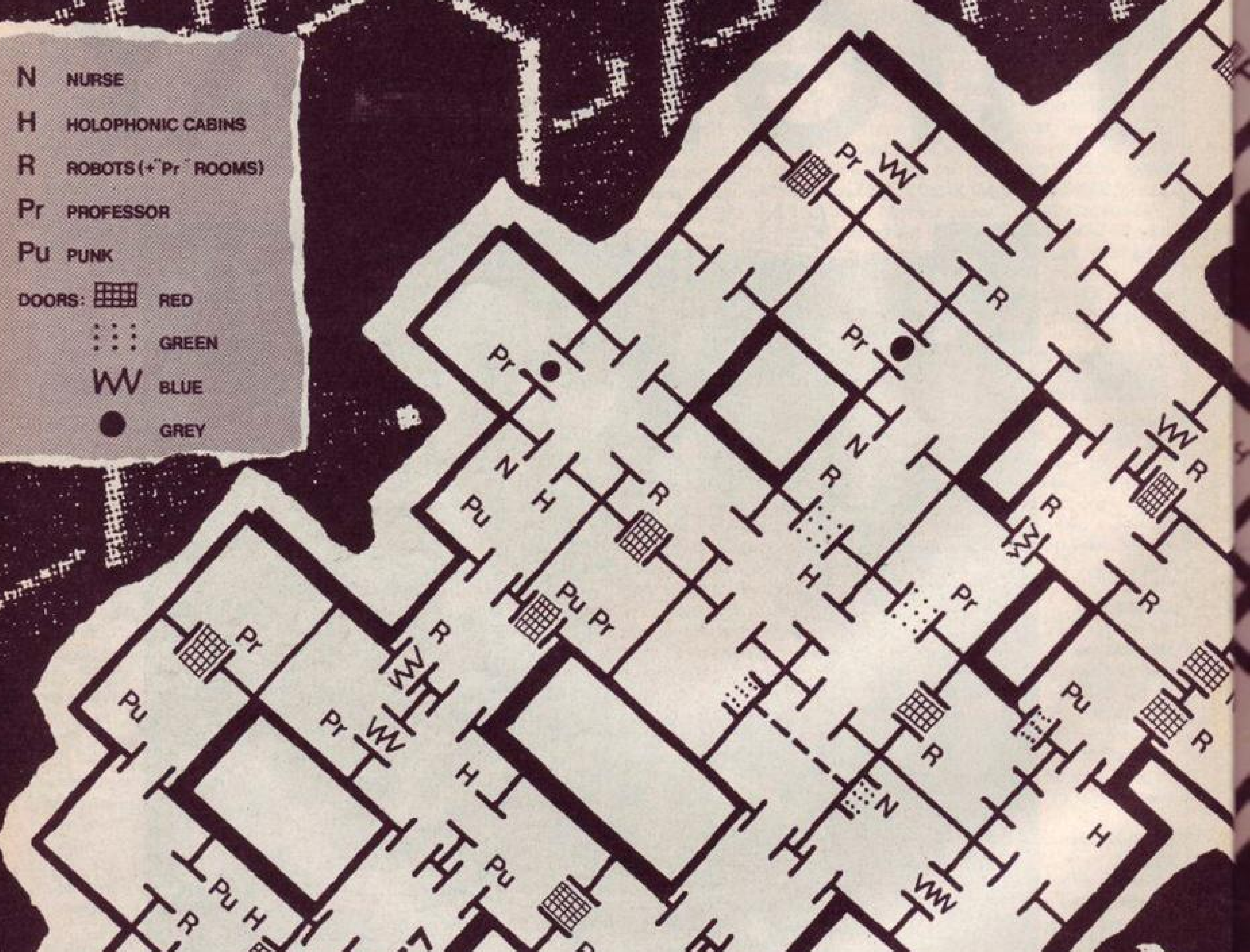
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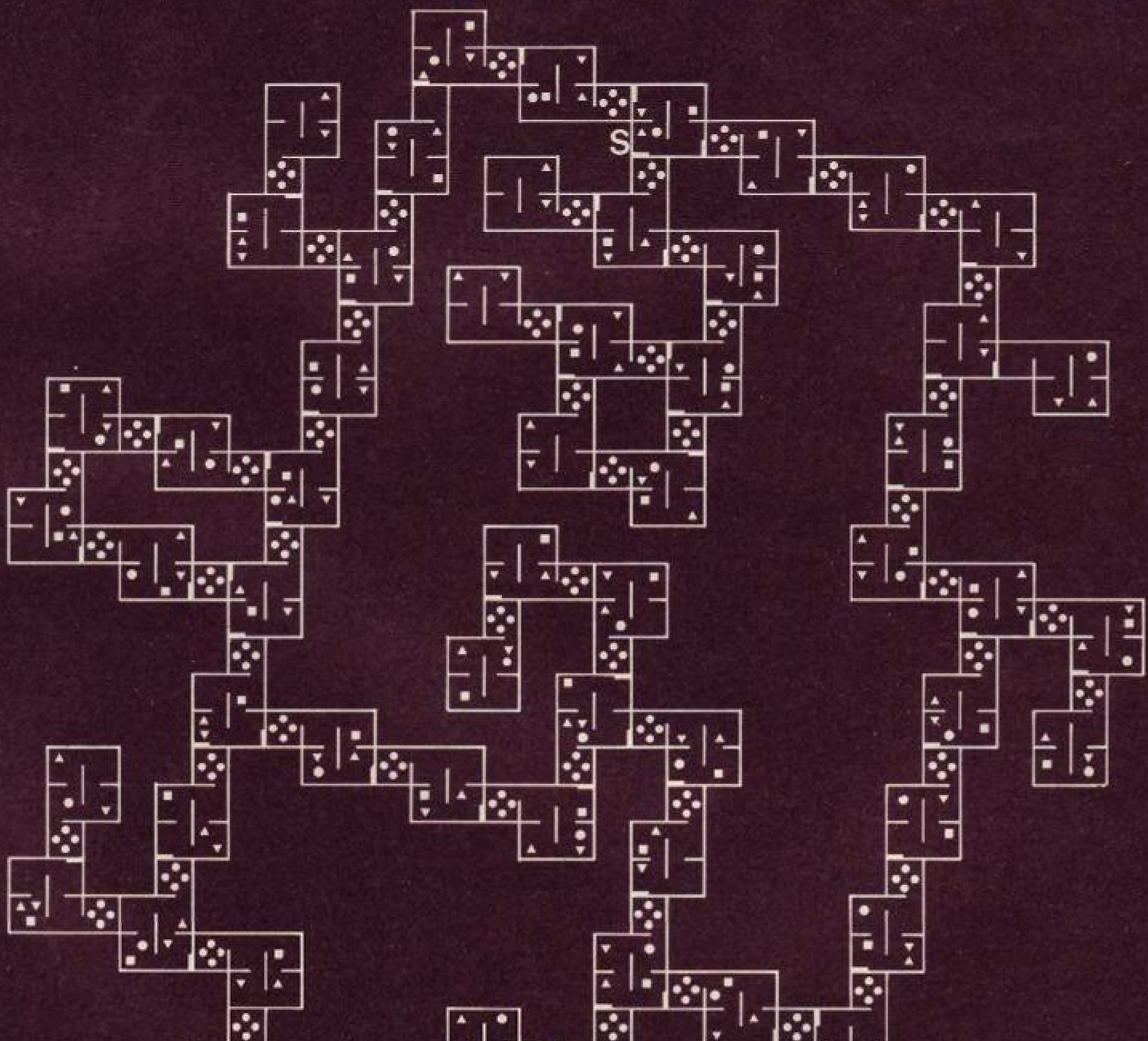
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H HOLOPHONIC CABINS
R ROBOTS (+ "Pr" ROOMS)
Pr PROFESSOR
Pu PUNK
DOORS: (grid symbol) RED
(dotted symbol) GREEN
VVV BLUE
● GREY



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■	CHEST	S	START
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▲	ANAESTHETIC	⁘	VOLCANIC PASSAGE
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Frantic, humourous, one-screen action. AA Rating 57%

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Submarine warfare simulation. AA Rating 47%

JET BOOT JACK (Amsoft/English Software)
Challenging platform game with slick graphics. AA Rating 70%

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Smooth, colourful, classic shoot-em-up. AA Rating 84%.

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The earlier versions for 464 or 664 owners. The disk program includes a mail-merge facility. £19.95 cass, £24.95 disk.

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Probably the best of the tape-to-disk copiers. £7.99 cass, £11.99 disk.

SUPERCALC 2
The amazing CP/M spreadsheet which sells for hundreds of pounds on other micros. £49.95 disk.

MASTERFILE
A good value database. £24.95 cass, £29.95 disk

MASTERCALC
Campbell Systems' powerful spreadsheet. Only £24.95 cass, £29.95 disk

HOW ORDERS ARE DEALT WITH

Amstrad Action Mail Order is run here in Somerton, but in a separate location from the main AA HQ. The operation is run by the super-efficient SUE TAYLOR, the woman who gets more mail in a day than most people get each year!

Unless your order includes programs which our suppliers cannot get hold of for some reason, Sue will despatch all packages within three days of receiving them. Therefore, allowing for the time in the post, you can normally expect to receive your parcel within a week to 10 days of ordering.

If it's delayed beyond that, the chances are you've ordered a title which either hasn't yet been released or is temporarily unavailable. In which case a phone call from you WON'T speed things up. (In fact, the reverse. Phone-calls are very time-consuming to deal with.) Naturally, if a long delay was likely we'd let you know.

Overseas readers can join in!

Readers in the Republic of IRELAND can order any of these goods at the same rates as British readers provided that payment is made in pounds Sterling. If you wish to pay in Irish punts you must add a IR£3.50 surcharge IN ADDITION to allowing for the current exchange rate – that's what it costs us to pay in your cheques or postal orders.

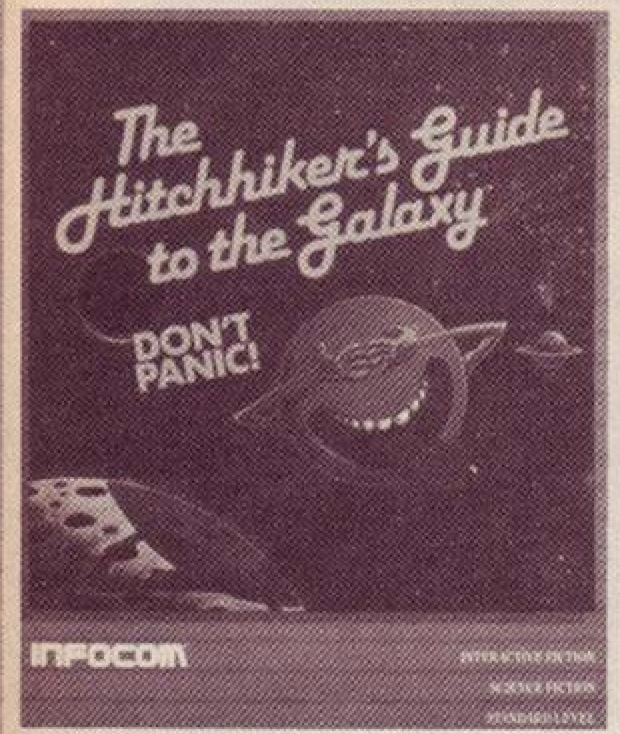
Readers elsewhere in EUROPE must add 25% to the cost of their order to allow for extra postage rates. Payment must be in pounds Sterling.

If you live OUTSIDE EUROPE please add 50% to the cost of your order to cover postage. Please also specify whether you require air-mail or surface delivery. We will pay refunds in cases where the postage turns out substantially cheaper than the extra money you have paid. Once again, payment must be in pounds Sterling.

INFOCOM ADVENTURES

Save £6 +!!

Hitch-hikers' Guide only £19.95 (disk)!
Other adventures only £16.95 (disk)!
CPC 464/664/6128 / PCW 8256 compatible



No one who's played an Infocom adventure is likely to dispute that they are among the most sophisticated computer entertainments money can buy.

There are no graphics, no animation, no colours. But the text you are given on screen and the programs' astonishing ability to understand and respond to your typed instructions are enough to have you glued to the keyboard for weeks.

'Hitch-hikers' Guide to the Galaxy' based on the Douglas Adams book/radio show/TV series is the most recent Infocom title and has made adventurers around the world speechless with its mix of brilliant humour and brain-twisting puzzles.

But the other titles in the range – Zork 1, Deadline, Seastalker and Planetfall – are also superb.

We've pulled out all the stops on these games to offer you them at absolutely the biggest discount we can afford. The retail price of 'Hitch-hikers' has been widely quoted as £24.95, but this in fact is the price EXCLUDING VAT. With VAT it works out at £28.69, so our offer of £19.95 (which INCLUDES VAT, post and packing) is almost £9 off!

Similarly the recommended price of the rest of the range is £22.95 each (£19.95 + VAT) so you can save £6 by buying it from us.

S * SPECIAL OFFERS * SPECI

MOON CRESTA

Free T-shirt!

Only £8.50 cass inc. T-shirt!
464/664/6128 compatible



OK, arcade freaks, here's a tasty little offer. Buy from us the classic shoot-em-up new out from Incentive Software and we give you a beautiful and exclusive Moon Cresta T-shirt. The only extra you pay is 55p post and packing – not bad for a T-shirt worth £3.95, eh?

Don't forget to specify your size on the order form!

THE MUSIC SYSTE

Only £12.95 cass, £16.95 disk!
464/664/6128 compatible



This program from Rainbird Software is very special indeed – by far the most sophisticated music composing system available on the Amstrad. It allows you to create and play a wide range of synthesized sounds, turning your Amstrad into a powerful musical keyboard.

It's already a bargain at its shop price of £15.95 on cassette, £19.95 on disk. However, as you can see, you can buy it direct from us for even less. It's a great offer for anyone interested in music.



BIG LEAGUE SOCCER

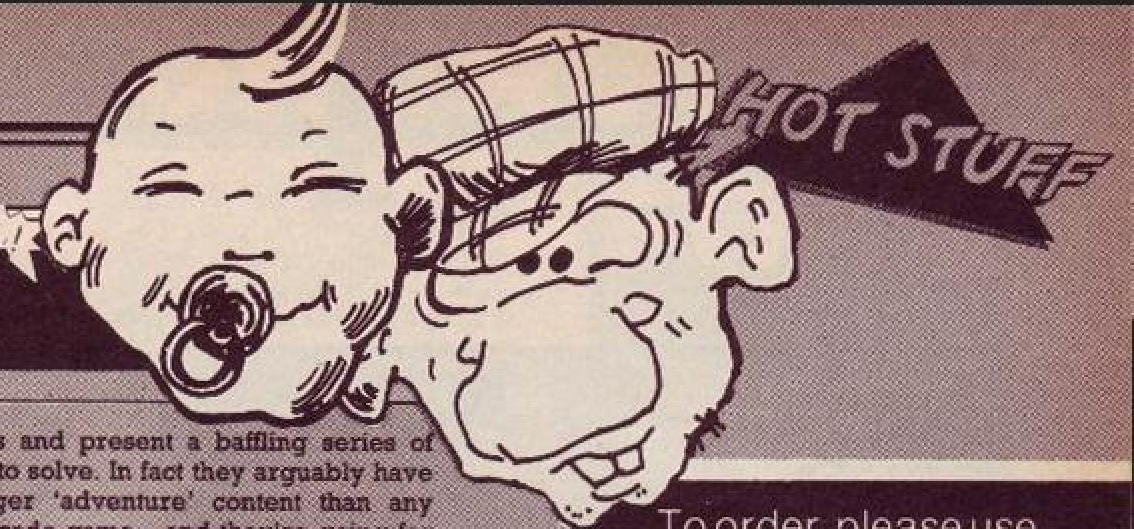
Save £2!

Only £4.95 cass
464/664/6128 compatible

This game won an AA Rave review which described it as 'better than Football Manager'. It puts you in the role of a league manager with all the financial and personnel decisions that involves. Experience the agony of sweating over your team selection and then watching your players outmanoeuvred on the pitch during the graphic highlights of each match! Or maybe you can cheer up our publisher by guiding Southampton to the top of the first Division...

I'm over the moon about this one, Brian.





WALLY GAMES

Only £6.90 for TWO!

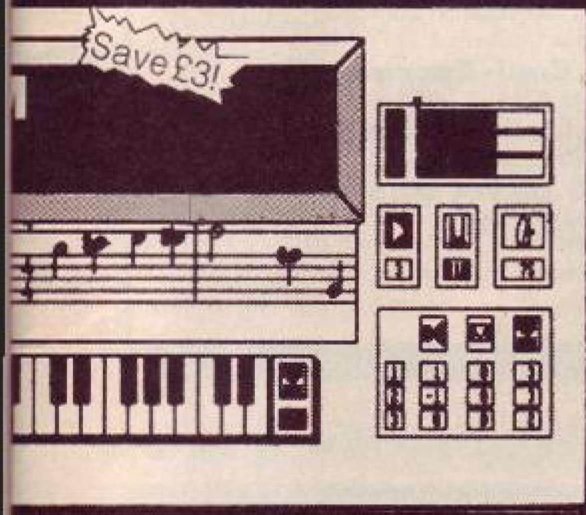
Super offer for fans of those lovable Wallies who star in that trio of excellent Mikrogen games Pyjamarama, Everyone's a Wally and Herbert's Dummy Run. You can have any TWO of these programs for, wait for it, £6.90 – they would normally cost almost £20!

The games feature great colourful graphics and present a baffling series of puzzles to solve. In fact they arguably have a stronger 'adventure' content than any other arcade game – and they're going for a song.

To order, please use the Special Offer section of the all-in-one form on p**98**

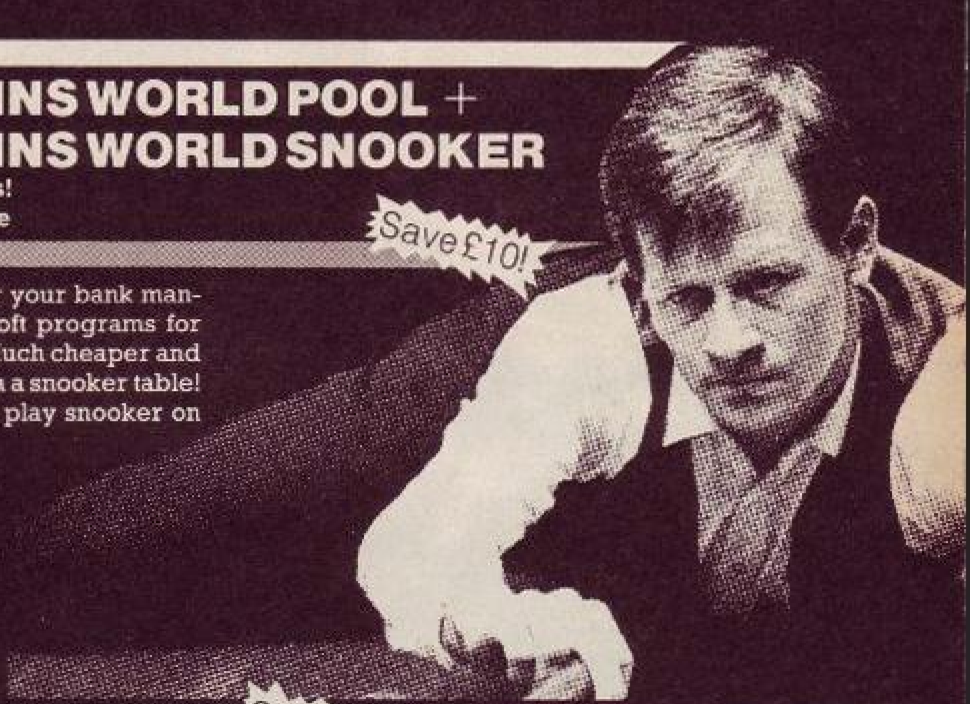
(Please note, these offers are separate from the rest of our mail order scheme. You cannot use vouchers to obtain further discounts, and you cannot claim the free gifts – we've already knocked off the most we can!)

AL OFFERS * SPECIA



ALEX HIGGINS WORLD POOL + ALEX HIGGINS WORLD SNOOKER

Only £7.90 two cassettes!
464/664/6128 compatible



Here's your cue to snooker your bank manager and pocket two Amsoft programs for less than the price of one. Much cheaper and easier to accommodate than a snooker table! Allows you and a friend to play snooker on TV anytime you like.

ELITE

Save £3!

Only £11.95 cass, £16.95 disk!
464/664/6128 compatible

If you've been wowed by our review of Firebird's amazing space epic Elite, but can't quite manage the normal asking price, here's an offer to blast you into hyperspace – a full £3 off the normal price of both the cassette and disk versions (yes, the shop price for the disk version is £19.95, not £17.95 as we printed two months ago).

If you've missed out on all the excitement about the game, just take it from us that Elite is one of THE greatest computer games of all time. In fact, it can become a way of life.

Please note that at time of writing the disk version is still unavailable because of a shortage of 3" disks, while the cassette version has been temporarily withdrawn because of a bug.

MINI OFFICE 2

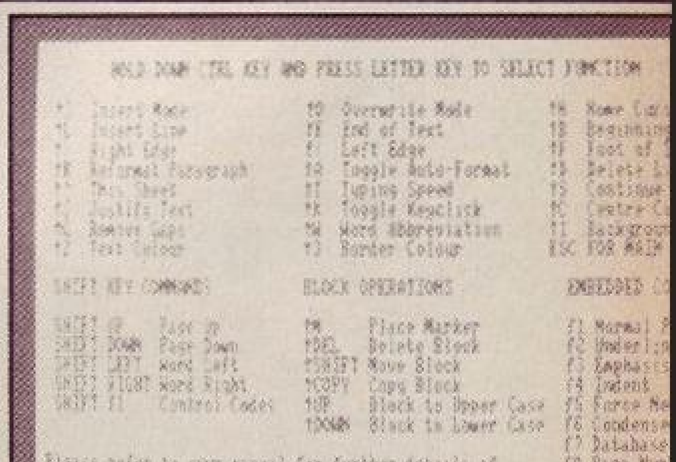
Save £3!

Only £11.95 cass, £16.95 disk!
464/664/6128 compatible

Strange as it may seem for us to pour praise on a title produced by one of our competitors, it is nonetheless true: Mini Office 2 (created by Database, publishers of 'Computing with the Amstrad') offers astonishing value for money – SIX interlinked programs which can transform your computer into a machine of immense power.

The programs are: Word Processor, Database, Spreadsheet, Graphics, Communications, and Label Printer. All are remarkably full-featured for a package of this cost – so this is not just a superb introduction to someone unfamiliar with serious software, it has the power to be put to genuine use.

Considering you could pay £20 for any one of the six programs, the 'Mini Office 2' shop price of £14.95 cass, £19.95 disk is something of a bargain. You can draw your own conclusions about the value of this offer...



Amstrad Action Readers' Charts

Elite is still up there at number one for the third month running, having received a massive 15.9% of the total votes as compared with 9.7% last month. Will it still be there next month, or could one of the newcomers – *Tau Ceti* or *Spindizzy* – leap to the top of the charts? Only your votes can decide, so keep sending them in.

In the serious charts *Graphic Adventure Creator* has returned to the top after spending a month at number two. *Protext*, after entering at number five last month, has slipped right out of the top 10, along with old regular *The Quill*. Both the *Mini Offices* are still doing well, holding both the third and fifth positions. Could *Mini Office 2* overtake it's older sister and become next month's number one?

SERIOUS SOFTWARE TOP 10

1.Graphic Adventure Creator
Incentive(20.6%)
2.AMX Mouse
AMS(9.8%)
3.Mini Office
Database(8.8%)
4.Tasword
Tasman(8.1%)
5.Mini Office 2
Database(6.2%)
6.Electric Studio Light Pen
Electric Studio(4.9%)
7.Transmat
Pride Utilities(4.8%)
8.Easi-Amsword
Amsoft(4.6%)
9.Melbourne Draw
Melbourne House(4.2%)
10.Laser Basic
Ocean(4.1%)

The Voting System

For anyone new to our state-of-the-art voting forms and system or anyone STILL having trouble here's another run down on what to so and how to do it.

You have at your disposal a TOTAL of 10 votes for each chart. These can be split up any way you like on up to five titles, but the number of votes you give to the different titles must add up to 10.

For example, on the games chart you could give all 10 votes to a single game. Or you could 5 votes to one game, 2 to another, and 1 each to three others. You just have to allocate your 10 votes to reflect your preferences as accurately as possible. What you CAN'T do is give five different games 7 or 8 votes each. That's greedy.

One further thing you certainly can't do is send in photocopies of the form. There have been attempts at jiggery-pokery in the past, so we want to avoid any possibility of it happening again.

GAMES TOP 20

1.Elite
Firebird(15.9%)
2.Yie Ar Kung Fu
Imagine(7.8%)
3.Sorcery Plus
Virgin/Amsoft(6.5%)
4.Spellbound
Mastertronic(5.5%)
5.Who Dares Wins II
Alligata(4.2%)
6.Sorcery
Virgin/Amsoft(4.0%)
7.Sweevo's World
Gargoyle Games(2.8%)
8.Highway Encounter
Vortex(2.7%)
9.Tau Ceti
CRL(2.3%)
10.Spindizzy
Electric Dreams(2.3%)
11.TLL
Vortex(2.3%)
12.Marsport
Gargoyle(2.2%)
13.3D Grand Prix
Amsoft(2.0%)
14.Way of the Exploding Fist
Melbourne House(1.9%)
15.Soul of a Robot
Mastertronic(1.4%)
16.Rambo
Ocean(1.3%)
17.Hypersports
Imagine(1.2%)
18.Starion
Melbourne House(1.2%)
19.Sabre Wulf
Ultimate(1.0%)
20.Get Dexter
PSS(1.0%)

THE ALL-IN-ONE ACTION FORM

IMPORTANT
Don't forget to fill in this bit!

Name ____________________

Age ____________________

Address ____________________

____

Telephone number ____________________

Fill in as much of the form as you wish (front and back). Then cut out the ENTIRE PAGE (even if you've only filled in parts of it) and post it to:
AA Forms, 18 Pinewood Drive
Somerton, Somerset, TA11 6JP

Mail Order Section

I would like the following titles:

Game	**Software house**	**Retail price**
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Total cost pre-discount,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,

Please circle ONE of the following A-H if it applies:

A: The total cost is under £5.

B: The total cost is between £5 and £10, and I enclose a 50p discount voucher.

C: The total cost is between £10 and £15, and I enclose a £1 discount voucher.

D: The total cost is between £15 and £20. I enclose a £1 discount voucher and claim ONE free game.

E: The total cost is between £20 and £30. I enclose a £2 discount voucher and claim ONE free game.

F: The total cost is between £30 and £50. I enclose a £2 discount voucher and claim TWO free games.

G: The total cost is over £50. I enclose a £5 discount voucher and claim TWO free games.

H: I enclose 1/2/3/4 vouchers from earlier issues of AA, entitling me to a 5%/10%/15%/20% discount.

After allowing for discount the total amount payable is,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,

I enclose a cheque/postal order for this amount made out to Future Publishing.

If you are claiming a free game or games please CIRCLE your first choice(s) and place a TICK by any of the other titles you will accept if your first choice(s) are out of stock:

American Football / Amsgolf / Chuckie Egg / Classic Adventure / Code Name Matt / Electro Freddy / Hunter Killer / Hunchback / Jet Boot Jack / Laser Warp / MasterChess / Manic Miner / Message from Andromeda / Roland Goes Digging / Space Hawks / Splat! / Super Pipeline II

Chart Section

Game chart voting form

I would like to vote for the following game(s):

GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
		Total number of votes = 10

Serious software voting form

I would like to vote for the following piece(s) of 'serious software':

PROGRAM	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
		Total number of votes = 10

THE ALL-IN-ONE ACTION FORM

Special Offer Section

Fill in name and address overleaf!

I would like to take advantage of the following special offer(s) and have placed a tick in the relevant box(es).

1. ELITE
☐ cass £11.95 ☐ disk £16.95

2. THE MUSIC SYSTEM
☐ cass £12.95 ☐ disk £16.95

3. MINI OFFICE 2
☐ cass £11.95 ☐ disk £16.95

4. PACE MODEM PACKAGE
☐ Complete £139.95

5. INFOCOM ADVENTURES
My machine is (please circle): CPC 464/664/6128 / PCW 8256
☐ Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy £19.95
☐ Zork 1 £16.95 ☐ Seastalker £16.95
☐ Deadline £16.95 ☐ Planetfall £16.95

6. MOON CRESTA + T-SHIRT £8.50
T-shirt size ☐ small ☐ medium ☐ large ☐ extra-large

7. BIG LEAGUE SOCCER
☐ cass £4.95

8. WALLY GAMES (Tick TWO for £6.90)
☐ Pyjamarama ☐ Everyone's a Wally ☐ Herbert's Dummy Run

9. ALEX HIGGINS WORLD POOL/SNOOKER
☐ cass(2) £7.90

I enclose a cheque/postal order for the total amount payable made out to Future Publishing. (Please note, you are not entitled to claim further discounts or free gifts on this amount. They apply only to the Mail Order section.)

High Score Section

Name ....

Address ....

....

....

....

(For administrative reasons you should fill in the above details here as well as on the reverse of the form).

High-score entry

I would like to register my high-scores in the following Amstrad games:

	GAME	SCORE	TIME TAKEN	LEVEL
1.				
2.				
3.				

I promise these are genuine scores achieved without using cheat methods.

Signed

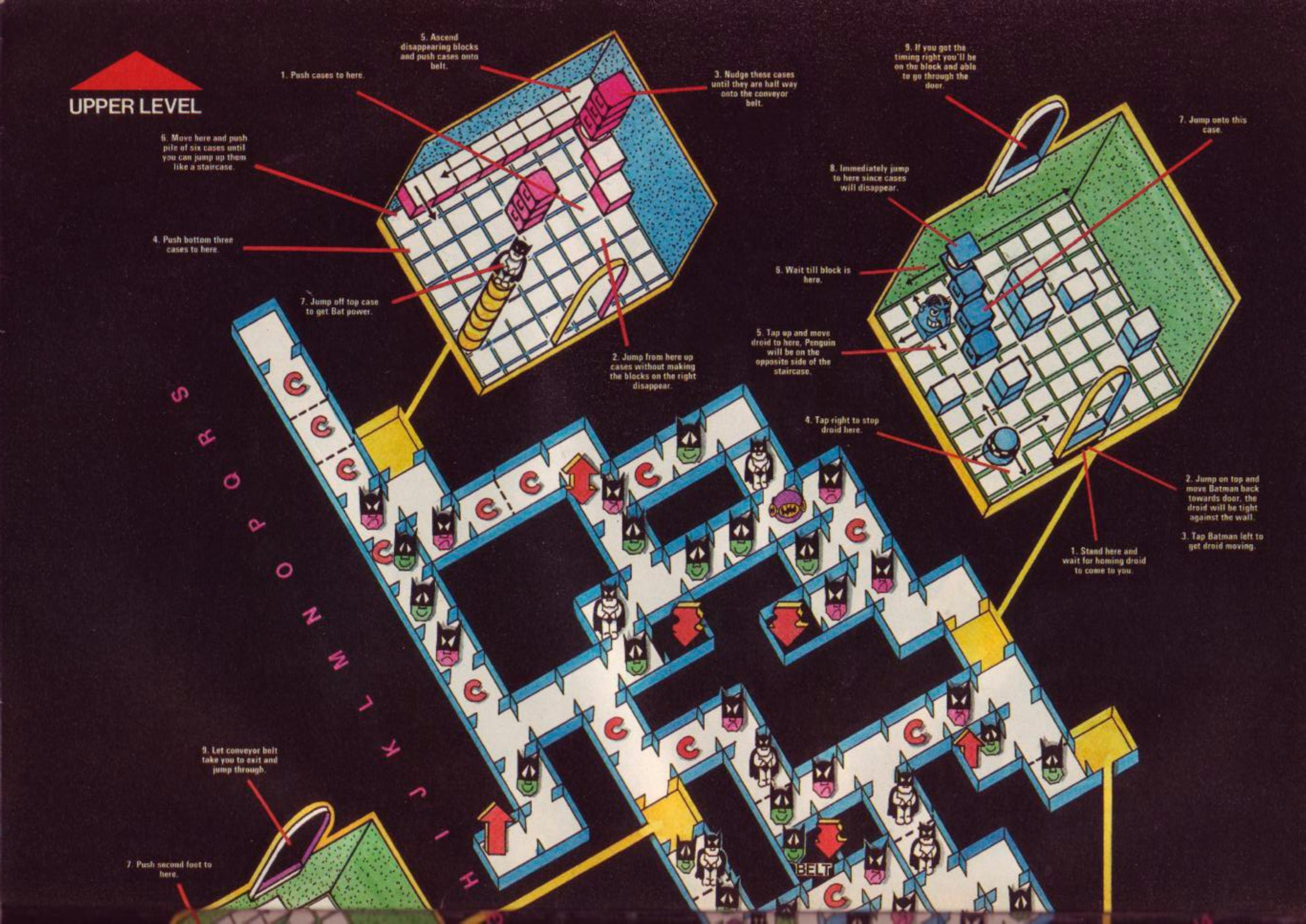
High-score challenge

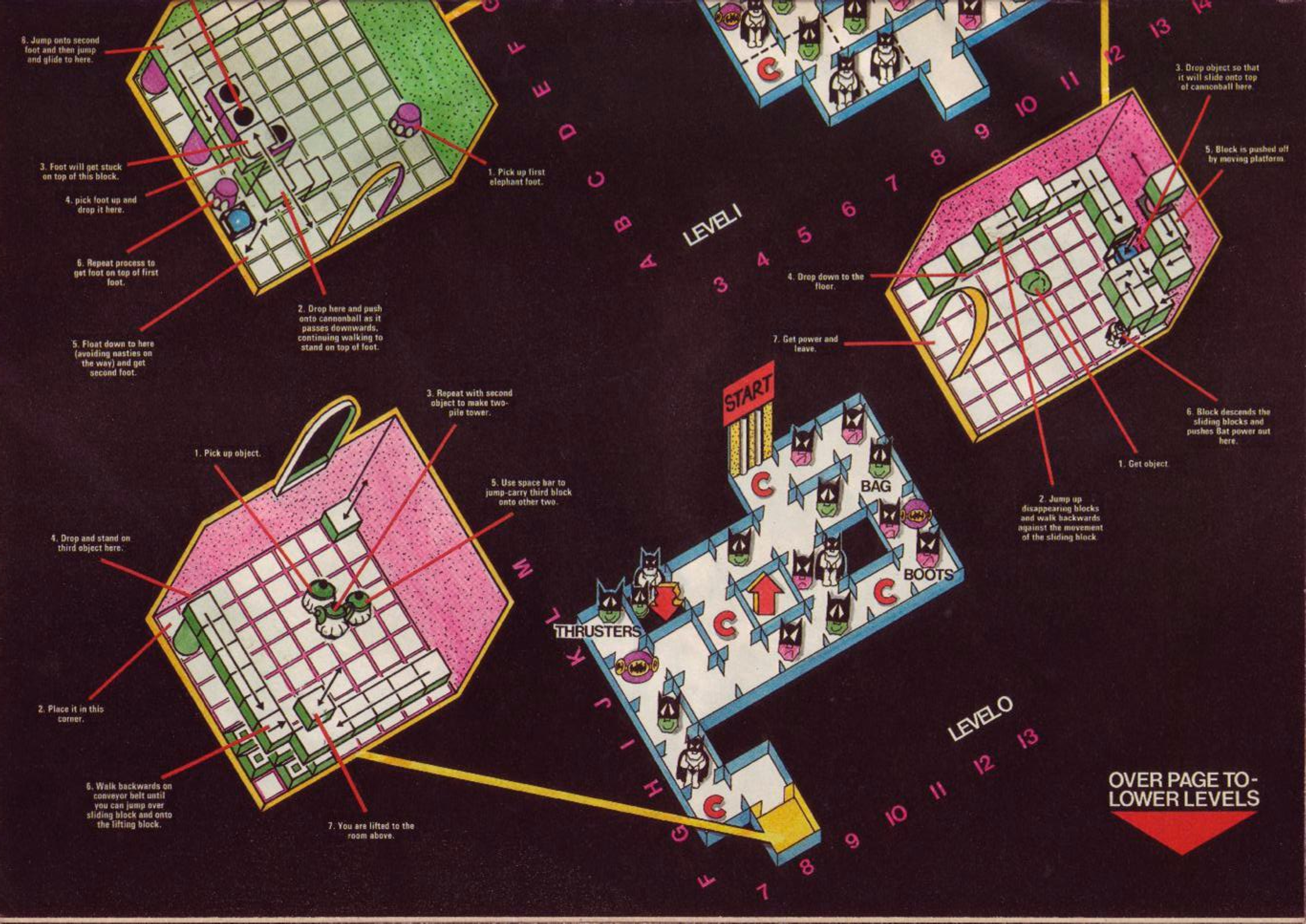
I hereby challenge the following high scores printed in Amstrad Action:

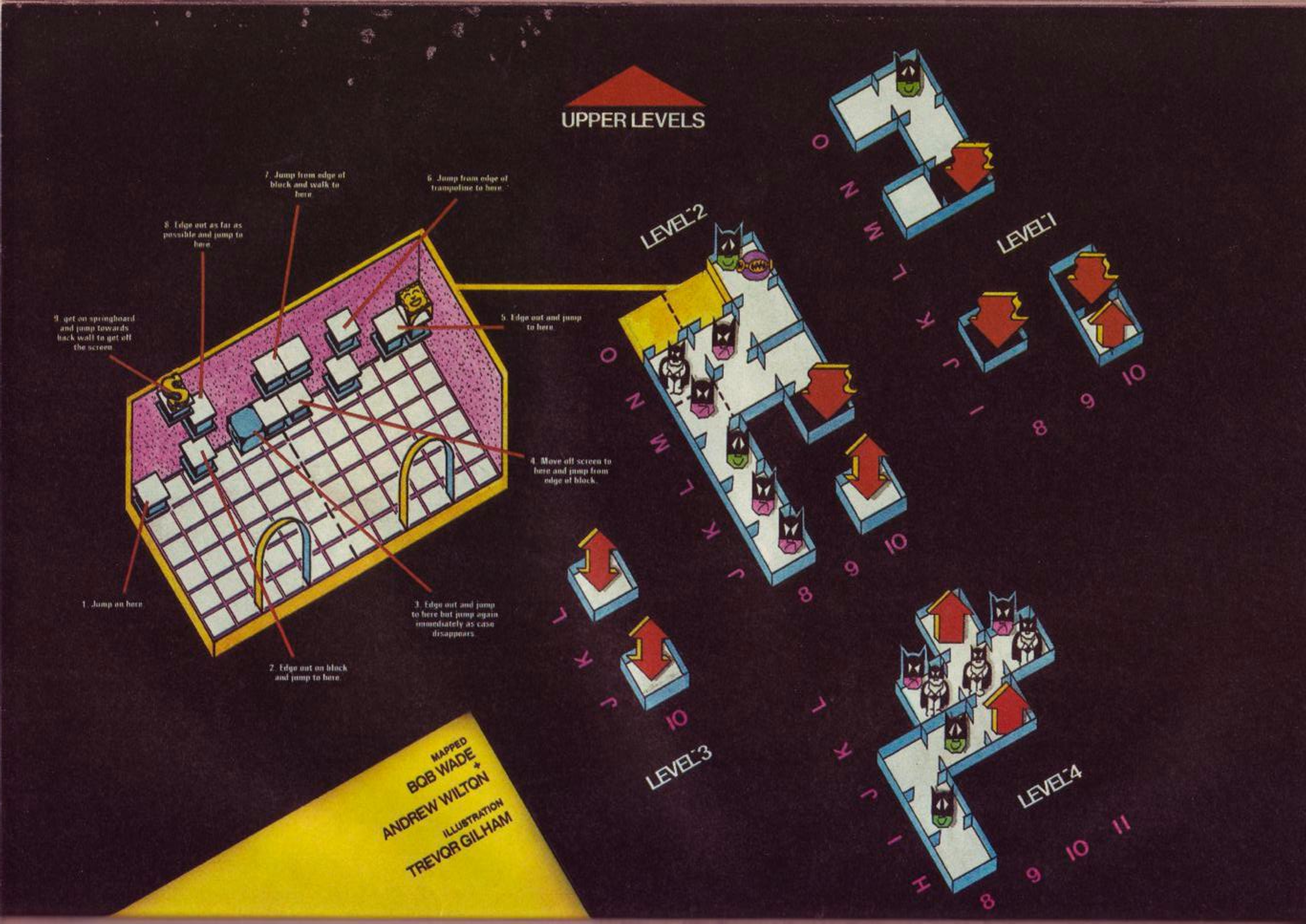
	GAME	SCORE
1.		
2.		

I think the score(s) impossible because:


BATMAN
AA's 4 PAGE - PLAYING GUIDE
LEVEL 4
BAT-GARAGE
F 3 4 5
LEVEL 3
H G F 3
LEVEL 2
3
8 → 12 13
M H E
NASTIES
JAWS·
·DEMON DISCO SKATER
CLOUD MONSTER·
·DOG
SPINDIZZIES·
·WEREWOLF
PENGUIN HEAD·
ocean
BAT-KEY
Doors
Extended room
Bat power
Immediate danger
Corridor
Reincarnation stone
Problem to negotiate
Lift upwards
Drop down
OVER PAGE TO-
LOWER LEVELS


UPPER LEVEL
1. Push cases to here.
5. Ascend disappearing blocks and push cases onto belt.
3. Nudge these cases until they are half way onto the conveyor belt.
6. Move here and push pile of six cases until you can jump up them like a staircase.
4. Push bottom three cases to here.
7. Jump off top case to get Bat power.
2. Jump from here up cases without making the blocks on the right disappear.
9. If you got the timing right you'll be on the block and able to go through the door.
7. Jump onto this case.
8. Immediately jump to here since cases will disappear.
6. Wait till block is here.
5. Tap up and move droid to here. Penguin will be on the opposite side of the staircase.
4. Tap right to stop droid here.
2. Jump on top and move Batman back towards door, the droid will be tight against the wall.
3. Tap Batman left to get droid moving.
1. Stand here and wait for homing droid to come to you.
S R Q P O N M L K J I H
BELT
9. Let conveyor belt take you to exit and jump through.
7. Push second foot to here.


8. Jump onto second foot and then jump and glide to here.
3. Foot will get stuck on top of this block.
4. pick foot up and drop it here.
6. Repeat process to get foot on top of first foot.
5. Float down to here (avoiding nasties on the way) and get second foot.
2. Drop here and push onto cannonball as it passes downwards, continuing walking to stand on top of foot.
1. Pick up first elephant foot.
LEVEL 1
4. Drop down to the floor.
7. Get power and leave.
3. Drop object so that it will slide onto top of cannonball here.
5. Block is pushed off by moving platform.
6. Block descends the sliding blocks and pushes Bat power out here.
1. Get object.
2. Jump up disappearing blocks and walk backwards against the movement of the sliding block.
START
BAG
BOOTS
THRUSTERS
LEVEL 0
1. Pick up object.
3. Repeat with second object to make two-pile tower.
5. Use space bar to jump-carry third block onto other two.
4. Drop and stand on third object here.
2. Place it in this corner.
6. Walk backwards on conveyor belt until you can jump over sliding block and onto the lifting block.
7. You are lifted to the room above.
OVER PAGE TO-LOWER LEVELS


UPPER LEVELS
LEVEL 1
LEVEL 2
LEVEL 3
LEVEL 4
1. Jump on here.
2. Edge out on block and jump to here.
3. Edge out and jump to here but jump again immediately as case disappears.
4. Move off screen to here and jump from edge of block.
5. Edge out and jump to here.
6. Jump from edge of trampoline to here.
7. Jump from edge of block and walk to here.
8. Edge out as far as possible and jump to here.
9. get on springboard and jump towards back wall to get off the screen.
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BOB WADE
+
ANDREW WILTON
ILLUSTRATION
TREVOR GILHAM

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Spy v Spy	9.95	7.46	Southern Belle	7.95	6.20	Battle of Planets	9.95	7.46
Cauldron	8.99	7.46	Frankie G T Hollywood*	9.95	7.46			
Bounty Bob Strikes Back	9.95	7.46	Matchday*	9.95	7.46	**DISK SOFTWARE**		
Snowball	9.95	7.20	Nightshade	9.95	7.46	Masterfile	29.95	24.95
Lords of Time	9.95	7.20	Skyfox	9.95	7.46	Mastercalc	29.95	24.95
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Emerald Isle	6.95	5.40	Commando	9.95	7.46	Creator	£24.95	19.95
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Fighter Pilot	9.95	7.46	Strangeloop	8.95	6.71	Marsport	14.95	11.50
Sorcery	8.95	7.00	Super Test	9.95	7.46	Battle of Britain	14.95	11.50
Dynamite Dan	7.95	6.20	Theatre Europe	9.95	7.46	Theatre Europe	14.95	11.50
Battle of Britain	9.95	7.46	Lord of the Rings	15.95	12.00	Spy v Spy	14.95	11.50
Fighting Warrior	8.95	6.71	Cleudo	9.95	7.46	Fighter Pilot	14.95	11.50
Get Dexter	9.95	7.46	Super Sleuth	8.95	6.71	Cyrus Chess	12.95	10.50
They Sold a Million	9.95	7.46	Computer Hits 10	14.95	11.50	3D Grand Prix	12.95	10.50
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Alien 8	9.95	7.46	Ping Pong	8.95	6.71	Tau Ceti	14.95	12.00
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Way of the Tiger	9.95	7.46	The Music System	14.95	11.50	Lazer Compiler	24.95	20.95
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Everyone's a Wally	9.95	7.46	First Steps with Mr Men	8.95	6.71	Rocky Horror Show	14.95	12.00
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Gremlins	9.95	7.46	Match Point	8.95	6.71	Mini Office	19.95	15.95
Robin of Sherwood	9.95	7.46	Winter Games	9.95	7.46			
Combat Lynx	8.95	7.00	Contraption	8.95	6.71	**8256 SOFTWARE**		
Macadam Bumper Pinball	9.95	7.46	Rescue on Fractalus	9.95	7.46	SuperCalc 2	49.95	44.95
Scrabble	9.95	7.46	Spin Dizzy	9.95	7.46	Hitchhikers Guide		
Monopoly*	9.95	7.46	Rambo	9.95	7.46	to the Galaxy	24.95	22.95
3D Grand Prix	9.95	7.46	Fairlight	9.95	7.46	3D Clock Chess	19.95	15.95
Cyrus Chess	9.95	7.46	Runestone	7.95	5.96	C Compiler	49.95	44.95
Wizards Lair	8.95	7.00	Back to the Future	9.95	7.46	Pascal MT/+	49.95	44.95
Highway Encounter	8.95	6.71	Critical Mass	8.95	6.71	Cardbox	99.99	90.00
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Jump Jet	9.95	7.46	Turbo Esprit	8.95	6.71	DR Graph	49.95	44.95
The Devil's Crown	9.99	7.50	Forbidden Planet	8.95	6.71	DR Draw	49.95	44.95
Zoids	8.95	6.71	2112AD	8.95	6.71			
Bored of the Rings	6.95	5.20	Spitfire 40	9.95	7.46	**SAGE SOFTWARE**		
Yie Ar Kung Fu	8.95	6.71	Lazer Basic	14.95	12.00	Popular Accounts	99.00	90.00
World Series Baseball	8.95	6.71	Lazer Compiler	19.95	15.95	Popular Payroll	69.99	59.00
Hypersports	8.95	6.71	Spy v Spy 2	9.95	7.46	Popular Combo	149.99	129.99
Geoff Capes Strongman	8.95	6.71	Doors of Doom	9.95	7.46	Sage Control &		
Boulderdash	9.95	7.46	Mini Office 2	14.95	12.00	Invoicing	69.99	59.00
View to a Kill	10.99	8.50	3 Weeks in Paradise	9.95	7.46	Popular Plus	149.99	129.99
						Super Combo	199.99	170.00

**DENOTES NEW TITLES THAT ARE AVAILABLE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. PLEASE RING FOR CONFIRMATION.*

WHY NOT COME AND PICK UP YOUR SOFTWARE PERSONALLY FROM OUR DISCOUNT SHOP AT 3 STATION CRESCENT, WESTCOMBE PARK, BLACKHEATH, LONDON SE3 7ER. RIGHT OUTSIDE WESTCOMBE PARK RAILWAY STATION ON THE SOUTHERN REGION. OPEN ON SATURDAYS ONLY FROM 10.30 'TIL 6.00 PM.

SELECTED AMSTRAD PROGRAMS

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CHEAT MODE

Spindizzy

You can't keep a good pokester down and Tim Gilbert of Whitby is back with a great poke for the Electric-Dreams classic. It's entered using our Method 1 and gives you infinite time and therefore lives. Well done Tim, exploring will now be a lot easier.

```
10 MODE 1
20 FOR T=49152 TO 49170
30 READ A$: POKE T,VAL("&"+A$)
40 NEXT T
50 CALL 49152
60 DATA 21, 40, 00, 11, C0, B0, 3E,
6A, CD, A1, BC, 3E, C9, 32, 8E, A8,
C3, 00, B0
```

Bob Wade checks out your tips, pokes and game-busting ploys. The best ones win a tenner – so why not send YOUR latest gem to: Cheat Mode, Amstrad Action, Somerton, Somerset TA11 5AH

SUPER-CHEATERS!

There are six £10 prize-winners this month because we forgot to tell you who won last month's three rewards. Phil Howard gets one for his pokes on *Sabre Wulf*, *TLL* and especially *Highway Encounter*. Paul Robson again for his *Cylu* map and a joint award to Andrew Ketteringham and an anonymous reader for their *Who Dares Wins II* maps. If that anonymous reader would like to contact us by phone we'll verify his or her identity and a fiver will be winging its way to him or her.

This month the worthy winners are Tim Gilbert for yet another marvellous poke – this time it was *Spindizzy* that scooped the jackpot, Steven Dunn for his *Sweevo's World* poke and Rick Artes for his *Sabre Wulf* tips.

SABRE WULF

Rick Artes of Horsham has sent in some tips on the Ultimate game that may help you out.

The most important tip is that Sabreman only battles succesfully when facing the creatures. So keeping your back solid up against the wall is important. Try to avoid fighting a creature going down a path if you can. Travelling the vertical paths using this technique will save you many lives.

Keep to the top half of the screen when possible, as the creatures only appear on the bottom half. Only three of the 12 nasties will follow you around and try to jump on you when your back is turned. These are the snake, lizard and small fruit bat.

Watch out for the native with the perm, like the wulf you cannot kill him. He can be warded off using the sword though if you see him coming.

The only flower worth getting is the blue one but watch out for when a flower's effect is wearing off and Sabreman flashes as creatures tend to get you as it wears off.

Finally the mega-tip. When you've successfully negotiated all of the maze, position yourself on the screen above the "Keeper wrought with hate" and his cave. Here you can trap the fireball in one of the top corners. You can get into the bottom left corner and become immune to attack. Now you just have to hold the fire button down to get a great score.

Sweevo's World

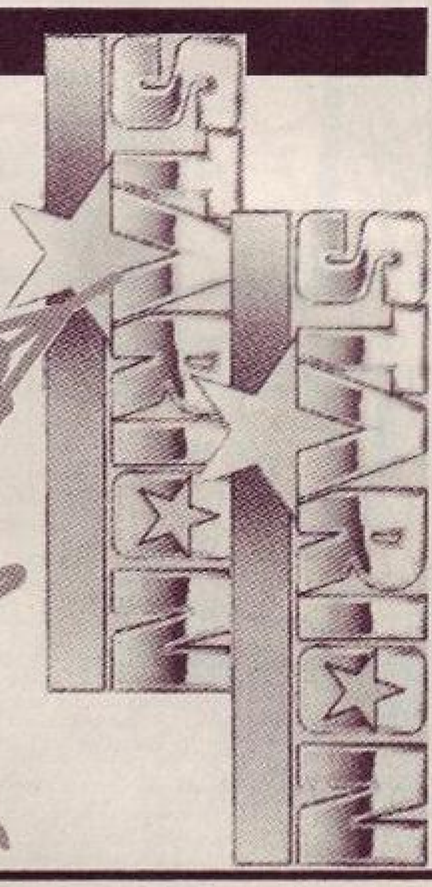
Steven Dunn from Cookham has provided some pokes for the Gargoyle game that will give you 255 lives, no energy loss and a happy smiling face. Enter it using Method 1.

```
10 OPENOUT"D":MEMORY &5D0:CLOSEOUT
20 LOAD"",&5DC
30 FOR Y=&643 TO &665: POKE Y,0:NEXT
40 LOAD"SWEEVO.BIN",&3040
50 POKE &9EC8,255
60 POKE &9003,5: POKE &9004,0
70 POKE &91E0,4: POKE &91E1,0
80 CALL &5DC
```

Starion

Good old Phil Howard from Nottingham has been at it again. This time he's provided infinite lives for the Melbourne House space game. Enter the poke using Method 1 and blast away to your heart's content.

```
10 DATA 50, 46, 48, 20, 5A, 41, 50, 50, 45,
44, 21
20 DATA 11, B2, 36, 00, 23, 36, 00, 23, 36,
00, 21
30 DATA C0, FF, 11, 3D, 84, 01, 0A, 00,
ED, B0, C3
40 DATA 03, 7E
50 MODE 1
60 MEMORY &2000
70 LOAD"LOADER"
80 INK 0,0: INK 1,6: INK 2,18: INK 3,26
90 BORDER 0
100 POKE &8097,&CA
110 POKE &8098,&FF
120 FOR X=&80C0 TO &80E2
130 READ A$
140 POKE X,VAL("&"+A$)
150 NEXT
160 CALL &8000
```



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Obsidian

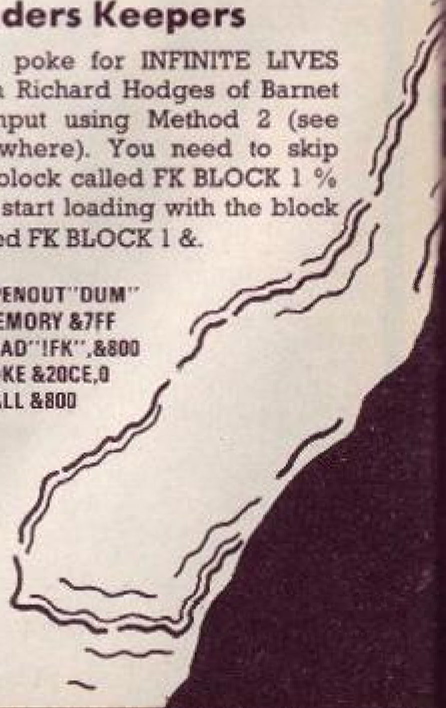
Here's a nice poke for the Artic arcade adventure from Tony Brown of Newport. It's entered using Method 2 (see elsewhere) to skip the loader and loading screen that comprise the first two filenames. Once entered it gives you infinite lives and a walking speed as fast as when flying.

```
10 OPENOUT"DUMMY"
20 MEMORY &950
30 FOR X=&950 TO &95B
40 READ A:POKE X,A
50 NEXT
60 CALL &950
70 POKE &17E6,0: POKE &1948,0
80 POKE &166E,1: POKE &14E6,1
90 CALL &1100
100 DATA &3E, &96, &21, &00, &10, &11,
&60, &95, &CD, &A1, &BC, &C9
```

Finders Keepers

This poke for INFINITE LIVES from Richard Hodges of Barnet is input using Method 2 (see elsewhere). You need to skip the block called FK BLOCK 1 % and start loading with the block called FK BLOCK 1 &.

```
10 OPENOUT"DUM"
20 MEMORY &7FF
30 LOAD"!FK",&800
40 POKE &20CE,0
50 CALL &800
```



Harrier Attack

Stephen Hales of Bury St.Edmunds has a way to hit the enemy patrol boat six times, every time.

Take off from the aircraft carrier at full speed and move one space above the water. When the missile from the boat is approaching shoot it down. Keep your finger on the fire button to shoot the top off the boat. When the boat is nearly underneath you hold down the space bar. When the plane has flown off let go of the fire button and space bar. You will score 3,010, the extra 10 being for hitting the missile.

Boulderdash

Kev Bovis from RAF Wildenrath has sent in an addition to the previously printed poke that not only gives you infinite lives but allows you to start on any of caves A to M on levels 1,2 and 3. It's entered using Method 1 explained elsewhere in this section.

```
10 MODE 1
20 MEMORY &7FFF
30 FOR I=&9000 TO &901E
40 READ A$
50 POKE I, VAL("&"+A$)
60 NEXT I
70 PRINT "INSERT TAPE AND PRESS PLAY"
80 CALL &9000
90 DATA 21, 90, 02, 11, 26, 70, 3E, 87
100 DATA CD, A1, BC, AF, 32, 80, 1B, 32
110 DATA 81, 1B, 32, 82, 1B, 3C, 32, 54
120 DATA 19, 32, 74, 19, C3, 52, 1F
```

THE WAY OF THE TIGER



This latest combat game, from Gremlin, has three sections to it and Rob Ward of Leicester has sent in some tips on the unarmed combat section.

Bob Wade adds: the giant troll can be disposed of with flying kicks. Flying kick once to hit him in the upper body and repeat the move to take you out of reach of his punch. Turn around and repeat the double kick. Keep turning and double kicking till he keels over. It takes a long while but you're fairly safe doing it.

NINJA: a difficult opponent to beat but low punches and kicks usually work well.

GOBLIN: low punches, kicks and mid kicks should keep him back. When he transforms then mid kicks and uppercuts should hold him off. As he jumps through crouch down to stop his blows getting in.

RHINO-HEAD: these are easy, just stand there mid kicking him in the chest. He'll probably headbutt you a few times but not often enough to beat you.

GIANT TROLL: this is the mean one of the bunch. Wait till he gets in range then mid kick him and hop backwards. Repeat this till he dies.

Animated Strip Poker

This silly program from Allan Pugh of Coupar Angus lets you see the animated sequences of Knightsoft's game. Enter it using Method 1.

```
10 INK 0,26: INK 1,0: INK 2,6: INK 3,2:
MODE 1: BORDER 9
20 CLS
30 MEMORY 20699: LOAD "CODE &
DATA"
40 CLS
50 CALL &A118: FOR N=1 TO 5000:NEXT
60 CALL &A09C: FOR N=1 TO 5000:NEXT
70 CALL &9FF3: FOR N=1 TO 5000:NEXT
80 PRINT"I'll show you again, OK"
90 CLS:GOTO 40
```

R.E.M.

Here are some cavern codes for the Blaby budget game from Riaz Ali of Cwmbran.

2. Moria
3. Vector
4. Indiana
7. Hawlmoon
8. Obelisk
9. Saltheart
12. Trelheim



Ghouls

Scott Miller of Glasgow has a great quickie tip to get a high score. All you do is hop on and off the first platform you come to until the score goes below zero and gives you 9990, or so.

Three Weeks in Paradise

J Bowman of Carshalton has a great tip on how to get infinite lives. As soon as you start the game run into the native. While the stars are spinning around Wally's head depress the middle two rows of the keyboard using a ruler or other instrument. When Wally gets up he won't have lost a life and will have infinite lives from there on. Great, eh?

RAID

Massive scores can be achieved on this US Gold game by using a tip from William Jenkins of Cramlington. When you reach the Shandoorian defence center, shoot all the doors, soldiers, towers and tanks to get into the reactor room. Hit the robot three times and then throw the rest of the discs away. This will put you back in the courtyard where you can repeat the whole procedure. This can carry on until you run out of men or you get fed up and decide to destroy the two reactor robots.

Poke methods

This is the section where we explain how to input the majority of the pokes using two types of method.

Method 1: Type in the listing. Rewind the game tape. Type RUN followed by pressing enter. Follow on screen prompts to load the game.

Method 2: The tape header/loader/title screen, comprising usually of one or two data blocks has to be skipped. Rewind the game tape. Type in CAT followed by enter and play the tape. Watch the screen and a message will come up

Found FILENAME block 1 OK

where FILENAME will be replaced by the name of the loading section. The next message that appears will be the main program appearing in the same style.

Found MAINFILE block 1 OK

where the MAINFILE will be different for each game. Note the point on the tape counter at which this second file appears. Stop the tape and rewind to just before that point. Type in the program and RUN it. Then press play on the tape deck.

Apology

At the end of last month's tips on *Grumpy Gumphrey* there was a reference to a map we hoped to print, unfortunately there just wasn't space. Sorry about that folks – we hope the tips helped you out enough.

Featuring Hi SCORE

the world's greatest Amstrad game-players

There's been a good response to the new guidelines we've set up on some scores and the competition on those is hot. Anyone wanting to get in on the act will need to put on their entry form that they adhered to the guidelines, otherwise we won't be able to enter the scores.

There are some scores that may raise a few eyebrows this month on *Chuckie Egg* and *Sorcery Plus*. But challengers beware because the authors of those scores have already sent clarification and explanations of their efforts that have satisfied us of their authenticity.

There are plenty of new games to get cracking on including *Alien Highway, Turbo Esprit, Bounder, Zoids* and *5th Axis* to name but a few. Don't forget the old favourites though because there are plenty of them that should still be testing your skills – example, why hasn't anyone completed *Boulder Dash* yet?!

Ahhh!
89,280 (Level 55) Lee Healy, Walsall.
38,140 Dene Graber, Bedford.
28,290 Shahan Saier, East Ham.

Airwolf
2,048 Ryan Harkin, Limavady.
1,703 Mark Dewey, Hoddesdon.
1,354 William Gattrell, Bangor.

Alien Break-In
887,120 Iain McKinnon, Glasgow.
292,164 Paul Mackenzie, Lenzie.
290,880 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.

Alien Highway
75,280 Bob Wade, Somerton.

Amsgolf
50 shots Robert Cairns, Aldershot.
51 shots Daniel Elkington, Solihull.
51 shots Mark Lampon, Ilford.

Android One
17,680 David Litherland, Bolton.
16,580 David Burns, Tetford.

Android Two
36,480 Stephen Raggett, Westbourne Park.
9,720 Paul Rushton, Market Drayton.

Batman
8,768 Bob Wade, Somerton.

Battle Beyond the Stars
26,600 Andrew Fry, Penhill.
17,650 Flemming Pedersen, Lemvig.
16,400 Michael Clark, Newton Grange.

Battle of the Planets
458 Paul Edwards, Stevenage.

Beach-Head
124,300 Rik, Cumnor.
124,000 Richard Ormson, Bury.
124,000 Tony Pigram, Chelmsford.

Binky
23,275 Paul Stagg, Grantham.

Blagger
72,200 (Level 14) Stuart Mozley, North Anston.
59,630 Alan McArdle, Newcastle.
56,525 Antony Critchley, Bracknell.

Boulderdash
1A-3K Paul Gill, Cheadle.
1A-2P Andrew Barley, Scunthorpe.
1A-2K Ashley Cotter-Cairns, Hemel Hempstead.

Bounty Bob Strikes Back
216,129 Ronnie Agnew, Liverpool.
101,000 (Level 11) Colin Davis, Dumbarton.
62,140 (Level 5) Shazad Rana, Manor Park.

Brian Bloodaxe
13,820 Stewart McCone, Pontefract.

Brian Jack's Superstar Challenge
4,819 David Millar, Johnstone.
4,789 George Reaves, Bradford.
4,673 Scott Logan, Kirkmuirhill.

Bruce Lee
56,525 Darren Ellis, Stanley.
53,625 JP Gorman, Edmonton.

Cauldron
101,575 Steven Parkinson, Horbury.
70,750 Ralph Turner, Newport.
55,900 Karen Brett, Folkestone.

Chiller
8,700 Ian Grainger, Wingate.
7,900 Lloyd Butler, Birmingham.
7,315 Ian McKinnon, Glasgow.

Chimera
5,915 Clifford Fenton, Ripley.
5,205 GM Gatter, London.
5,077 Richard Pemberton, Charlton.

Chuckie Egg
3,590,240 (Level 185) Andy McCammont, Darlington.
2,049,350 (Level 111) Alan Steele, Didcot.
572,580 (Level 40) Carl Mollart.

Codename Mat 1
1,106 George Reaves, Bradford.
1,106 Michael Dunne, Bonnyrigg.
1,090 Eric Henry, Drogheda.

Codename Mat 2
52,100 Kelvin Clarke, Telford.
27,150 Eric Henry, Drogheda.
23,960 Christoper Hardy, Weymouth.

Combat Lynx
943,700 Andrew Fry, Penhill.
910,300 Owen McGarvey, Glasgow.
500,000 Karsten Jensen, Aalborg.

Commando
46,900 Trevor Gilham, Somerton.

Confuzion
590,005 (Level 66) Lamaan Ball, Cowley.
147,145 (Level 31) Duncan Ellis, Ilkley.
139,665 Jason Grandin, Penylan.

The Covenant
46,320 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.
39,104 Stephen Jones, New Bolingbroke.
19,120 Stewart Eves, Isleworth.

DT's Decathlon
206,130 Ashley Russell, Walton-on-Thames.
150,680 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.
149,050 JP Gorman, Edmonton.

DT's Supertest
88,890 Mark Horton, Greenford.
59,944 John Harding, Chippenham.
38,380 Thomas Hearn, Gunthorpe.

Death Wake
173,102 Jonathan West, Romford.

Defend or Die
4,340,000 Simon Sutton, Cheltenham.
2,571,925 Paul Hyett, Cheltenham.
2,033,650 Jonathan Stewart, Dundee.

Devil's Crown
63,170 D Paterson, Tillicoultry.
42,200 G Smith, Sheffield.
40,610 RM Thompson, Grangemouth.

Don't Panic
12,000 Kathryn Collin, Dunfermline.
8,150 D Collin, Dunfermline.
650 Adrian Sill, Doncaster.

Doors of Doom
70 Gerry Hughes, Cranleigh.

Dynamite Dan
2,169 Richard Burton, Helston.
1,718 Nigel Miller, Tonbridge.
1,511 Lawrence Smith, Newport.

Electro Freddy
4,115 Jerome Chui, Caerphilly.
4,035 Alvin Thompson, Hebburn.
3,410 Thomas Tofield, Ashford.

Er*bert
132,800 Lawrence Smith, Newport.
132,300 Julian Cater, East Sheen.
126,850 Richard Denton, Torquay.

Everyone's a Wally
3,150 Antony Critchley, Bracknell.
3,000 A Grimshaw, Blackburn.
2,130 Paul Bennett, Rhondda.
2,130 Andrew Purdy, Wardley.

Fighting Warrior
206,090 Rick Artes, Horsham.
202,790 David Hammond, Fulwood.
150,610 Stephen Clough, New Brancepeth.

Fireant
39,600 Gary Brickley, Fife.
34,200 David Burns, Tetford.
33,300 G Veazey, Peacehaven.

Frankie goes to Hollywood
75,000 (79%) Toby Kayes.

Fruity Frank
40,800 Alvin Thompson, Hebburn.
36,010 Andy Keeble, Bromley.
32,200 Frank Roby, Sutton Manor.

Galactic Plague
205,900 Karen Brett, Folkestone.
193,310 Steven Walden, Cheltenham.
121,840 Neil Stevens, Maidstone.

Gauntlet
201,500 Jonathan Shaw, Liskeard.
64,960 Andrew Powell, Telford.
42,640 David Schofield, Retford.

Get Dexter
28,000 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.
2,700 Iain McKinnon, Glasgow.

Ghostbusters
66,800 David Hammond, Fulwood.
49,500 L Warren, Alton.
39,000 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.

Ghouls
37,547 Robert Booty, Solihull.
11,053 David Burns, Tetford.
8,160 Christoper Devlin, St Helens.

Gilligan's Gold
623,931 David Finlayon, Dundee.
598,100 Michael Clark, Midlothian.
501,750 Ian Leitch, Blandford Camp.

3D Grand Prix
15,023 Hugh Lacey, Corsley.
9,832 Rik, Cumnor.
9,738 David Vincent, Hernbay.

Grand Prix Rally 2
83,184 David Dumigan, Lytham.
72,464 Geoff Kerslake, Woodham Ferrers.
70,690 FJ Griffith, Birkenhead.

Gyroscope
39,620 Simon Dennis, Menston.
39,140 George Reaves, Wibsey.
28,610 Lee McMahon, Manchester.

Harrier Attack
770,450 Graham Ross, Devizes.
725,600 Simon Beldon, Pudsey.
655,100 Michael Bradley, Blarney.

Haunted Hedges
299,470 Claire Johnson, Sutton Coldfield.
274,600 Dominic Gourlay, Mansfield.
112,870 Paul Stagg, Grantham.

Highway Encounter
242,100 Stephen Raggett, Westbourne Park.
214,900 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.
148,370 RG Messenger, Perth.

Hunchback
1,508,000 Michael Clark, Midlothian.
1,400,000 Daryl Ward, Wigston.
1,200,000 Jason Dixon, Selby.

Hunchback 2
17,100 Jason Carpenter, Abernethy.
9,000 Andrew Purdy, Woodley.
6,250 Steven McDougall, Aberdeen.
6,250 William Catrell, Bangor.

Hypersports
159,582 Lawrence Smith, Newport.
136,985 George Reaves, Wibsey.
123,320 John Harding, Chippenham.

Jet Boot Jack
258,900 David Finlayson, Dundee.
160,325 Lee Healy, Walsall.
136,950 Flemming Pedersen, Lemvig.

Juggernaut
48,900 Eric Henry, Drogheda.
9,500 Michael Speers, Donoghadee.

Killer Gorilla
375,000 Adrian McGivern, Dorchester.
345,400 Christopher Devlin, St Helens.
175,900 Matthew Truman, Bath.

Kong Strikes Back
648,600 Lawrence Smith, Newport.
646,300 Mark Brayshaw, Leeds.
535,600 Claire Johnson, Sutton Coldfield.

Kung Fu
900 Iain McKinnon, Glasgow.
792 Khin Wan Lai, Hull.
782 James Stalker, Ellesmere Port.

Laserwarp
368,730 Denis Condren, Filey.
207,000 Michael Wilkes, Stourbridge.
198,860 T Grogan, Blackburn.

Locomotion
8,401 Mike Drury, Swinton.
5,338 Christopher Eng, London.
2,558 Michael Downie, Dalston.

Macrocosmica
11,974 Jennifer Cleal, Pinner.
349 Mr Talbot, Andover.

Manic Miner
250,112 Wayne Learoyd, Bramley.
97,722 Jack Condon, Dublin.
94,989 Martin Luise, Solihull.

Minder
£35,095 Mark Wagner, Pinner.
£24,364 George Reaves, Bradford.
£22,096 Mark Tozer, Canvey Island.

Moon Buggy
159,100 Lawrence Smith, Newport.
127,310 Patrick Grant, Holbrooks.
89,500 Robert Frost, Earls Barton.

Mr Freeze
16,870 Stuart Hutchinson, Reading.
16,240 Peter Wright, Stourport.
13,870 Jamie Thomson, Leighton Buzzard.

Mutant Monty
48,150 Marcus Passant, Perton.
45,350 Phil Wand, Brentwood.
44,950 A Wagstaffe, Whitchurch.

Nightshade
1,222,000 Julian Bunn, Newport.
797,000 Christopher Hoare, Denham.
589,000 A Hill, Bramhall.

Nomad
2,350 Richard Pemberton, Charlton.

Number One
1,362 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.
1,222 JF Scott, Longridge.
990 Gareth Jones, Whitstable.

Obsidian
13,600 Daragh Ward, Dublin.

One Man and his Droid
15,550 Noel McVea, Bangor.
13,500 L Warren, Alton.
10,112 Simon Boot, Witham.

On the Run
74,110 Daniel Singerman, Southampton.
74,060 Patrick McCorry, Belfast.
60,000 Ranjit Singh, Queen's Park.

Pinball Wizard
42,715 Craig Keene, Thornton Heath.
31,775 Roger Wilson, Blackburn.
29,550 Paul Smith, Huddersfield.

Ping Pong
6,800 Steven Parkinson, Horbury.
5,320 Noel McVea, Bangor.
3,120 David Parkinson, Horbury.

Punchy
1,132,320 Mark Salt, Irlam.
965,000 Michael Bradley, Blarney.
235,990 Alan Jackson, Wolverhampton.

Raid
3,119,050 William Jenkins, Cramlington.
1,249,400 Alan Watson, Inverness.
1,117,200 Alan Stenson, Catterick Garrison.

Rambo
431,560 Ronnie Agnew, Dovecot.
319,425 Stephen Clough, New Brancepeth.
202,450 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.

Rock Raid
32,780 Stephen Gray, Bath.
30,640 Shafqat Rasul, Alloa.

Saboteur
39,000 Andrew Barratt, Scunthorpe.

Sabre Wulf
591,250 Craig Thomson, Eyemouth.
402,000 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.
391,020 Paul Simpson, London.

Sir Lancelot
82,240 (Level 148) Simon Davies, Filey.
56,830 GJM McGouran, Birmingham.
15,400 (Level 28) Steven Sellwood, Warnham.

Skyfox
272,500 A Porter, Peterborough.
38,500 Richard Craven, Ilkley.
37,500 Mark Thould, Canterbury.
37,500 Gerry Hughes, Cranleigh.

Sorcery
Many scores over 97,000

Sorcery Plus
206,317 WK Roberts, Felton.
154,450 Joanne Sturton, Orpington.
138,917 Christoper Hoare, Denham.

Space Hawks
79,650 Dominic Hegarty, Cork.
77,550 Mark Wagner, Pinner.
77,050 David Baker, Cirencester.

Spannerman
100,900 David Finlayson, Dundee.
86,900 Julian Cater, East Sheen.
84,900 Andrew Brooks, Warrington.

Spindizzy
119 jewels Ian Hopkinson, Wool.
78 jewels Ronnie Agnew, Dovecot.
51 jewels Brian Hoyland, Conisbrough.

Splat
22,535 David Cobane, Wythenshawe.
13,210 Roy Williams, London.

Star Avenger
17,330 Kevin Bradshaw, Fife.
16,810 Christopher Eng, London.
16,220 David Rice, Glasgow.

Starion
38,305 Shafqat Rasul, Alloa.
32,911 Sean Brady, Eltham.
32,416 Robert Barclay, Desborough.

3D Starstrike
784,600 John Harding, Chippenham.
781,100 Gerry Hughes, Cranleigh.
764,500 Mark Wagner, Pinner.

Strangeloop
27,997 Julian Cater, East Sheen.
18,747 Paul Newcombe, Birkdale.
13,179 Alexander Kirk, Northwood.

Super Pipeline 2
200,940 David Parkinson, Horbury.
114,200 Brad Howarth, Saltford.
107,995 Gerry Hughes, Cranleigh.

Supersleuth
20,300 Donald Sharkey, Scunthorpe.

Survivor
436,300 RF Hemmings, Swindon.
367,500 Paul Edwards, Stevenage.
302,800 Eddie Filkins, Runcorn.

Tankbusters
18,300 Ian Boffin, Sunbury-on-Thames.
1,350 Kelvin Clarke, Telford.
890 Darren Ellis, Stanley.

Tau Ceti
22,892 (20 rods) Rhys Jones, Orton Goldhay.
20,885 (20 rods) Paul Guest, Telford.
20,803 (20 rods) Richard Woods, Mablethorpe.

Thing on a Spring
15,860 Andrew Barratt, Scunthorpe.
4,444 Martin Holland, Scholes.
3,900 Simon O'Connell, Sidcup.

TLL
56,100 (Level 18) Martin Whitsed, Spalding.
55,790 (Level 18) Darren Dee, Canton.
54,440 PM Davidson, Norwich.

Turbo Esprit
6,750 Andrew Barratt, Scunthorpe.

Way of the Exploding Fist
85,000 Paul Hopkinson, Wool.
78,900 Flemming Pedersen, Lemvig.
53,400 JP Gorman, Edmonton.

Who Dares Wins 2
368,980 Brian Hoyland, Conisbrough.
118,130 Jason Travis, Prestwich.
110,480 Lawrence Smith, Newport.

Wizard's Lair
198,860 Stephen Raggett, Westbourne Park.
168,385 Adrian Leigh, Stockport.
152,000 Paul Lewis, Northwich.

Wriggler
5,422 Iain McKinnon, Glasgow.
4,580 Paul Hyett, Cheltenham.

Yie Ar Kung Fu
459,960 Paul Jolleys, Hindley Green.
454,860 Andrew Cavender, Peterborough.
411,720 Ian Leitch, Blandford Camp.

Zorro
999,990 Neal Thompson, Co. Down.
210,250 Colin Winter, Grantham.
44,600 Lee McMahon, Manchester.

SPECIAL GUIDELINES

On the following games you must enter your score according to these guidelines:
BOULDER DASH: level reached, not score.
BRUCE LEE: score for destroying the wizard once.
DT's SUPERTEST: combined scores for days one and two played through once only.
GHOSTBUSTERS: score achieved after a single game starting from a $10,000 account limit.
3D STARSTRIKE: highest score for one pass through all stages at any level.
SUPER PIPELINE II: highest score after completing 16 screens.
TAU CETI: rods collected.
WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST: highest score after defeating two opponents on tenth dan.
YIE AR KUNG FU: highest score for defeating first eight opponents.

YOU can enter YOUR high-scores and win the chance of nationwide fame in these pages by using the High Score section of our All-in-One Action Form. Cheats, beware. If your score is challenged and you can't validate it, you expose yourself to public humiliation and shame!

JUNE CHALLENGES

Score challenged: 943,120 on *Nightshade* by Ralph Turner.
Challenger and reason: A Porter. You can't get a twenty or a hundred.

Score challenged: 216,129 on *Bounty Bob* by Ronnie Agnew.
Challenger and reason: Brad Howarth. You can't get a nine at the end of your score.

Score validated: 115,573 on *Hypersports* by Paul Edwards.
Validator and reason: Lawrence Smith. Any number can be achieved on the end of a score depending on what time you get for the swimming.

Kode-Kracker

Crack the fiendish code and you could win yourself a copy of *Nexus (the game) from Nexus (the company).*

Nexus, the game, is set inside the HQ of an evil drugs ring. The player takes the part of an investigative journalist. Armed with his trusty tape-recorder and a variety of combat skills, his objective is to make contact with N.E.X.U.S. This is a group of undercover agents working to break the ring from the inside.

The reporter hopes that he will be able to aid N.E.X.U.S and gather information to file a world scoop with his newspaper. During his mission, the reporter stumbles across a mysteriouly coded document. He transmits the code back to his editor on The Daily Clarion. The editor turns to you and snarls 'Break that code!'

So all you ace reporters out there have to do is crack the coded message and translate it into plain English. It shouldn't take you more than a few days and a bit of mainframe computing time. Then rush the solution to us here at Amstrad Action – you could be one of the fortunate fifty to get a copy of *Nexus.*

Killer Kar Komp

Draw an ace killer car of the 21st Century and you could win a COMPLETE Scalextric set, courtesy of *Turbo Esprit*-makers Durell.

Durell Software are giving away some fabulous prizes in this _Turbo Esprit_-inspired competition:

1st Prize – A complete Scalextric set.

2nd Prize – two radio-controlled model cars.

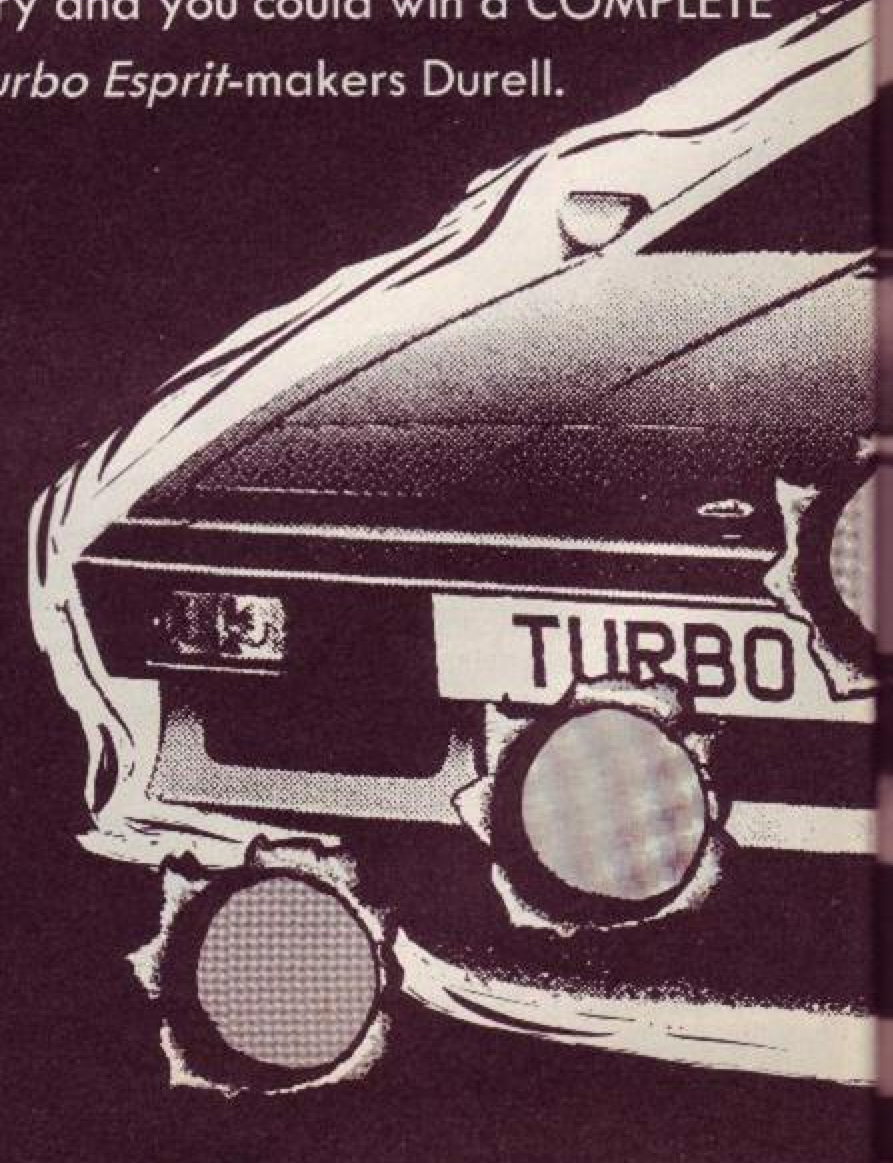
3rd Prize – one of 10 copies of AA Rave _Turbo Esprit_.

But there are none of the traditionally silly AA questions in this competition – if you win it will be because you've used your brain to the limit of its capability.

What you have to do is design and draw for us the ultimate in automotive assassination, the kind of car a 21st century psycho with a driving licence would want. Should it have machine guns or lasers? Do you want jet propulsion or nuclear power? One ejector seat or two?

This is the kind of question you'll have to consider if you're to be in contention for the prizes. Imagination and wit are much more important than artistic ability, so don't be put off if you're no Picasso.

Sketch your plans on a fairly large sheet of paper – but no bigger than A4 – and send them to: _Killer Kar Komp, Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS._



Komp



Competition entries
The closing date for this month's competitions is Friday June 6th. Entries for the *Nexus* comp should be on a postcard or the back of an envelope. The address for both competitions is: **Amstrad Action, The Old Barn, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.**

1st PRIZE

A superb Scalectrix Ford Escort XR3i racing set worth around £50!

TWO 2nd PRIZES

Radio-controlled cars worth around £30!

RUNNERS UP PRIZES

Seven runners up will receive copies of the great Durell game *Turbo Esprit* – copies will also go to the first and second prize winners.

ADVERTISER'S INDEX

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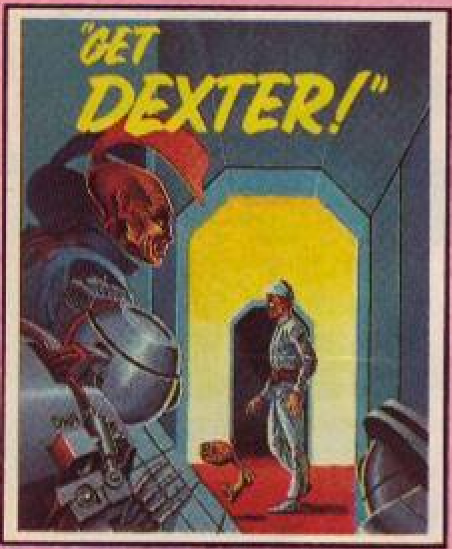


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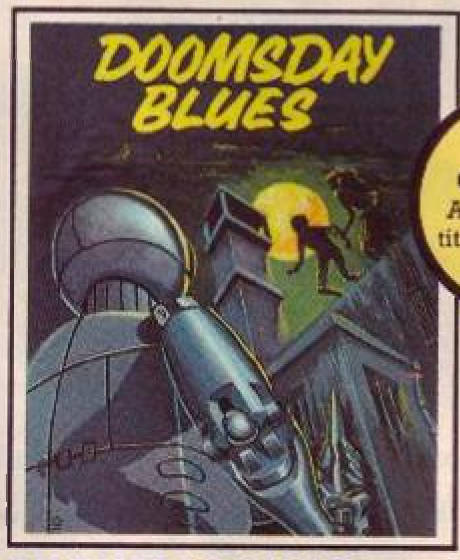
GET DEXTER

Our Mastergame review in this issue plus the screen demonstrated on our tape should be enough to convince you this program from France has simply astonishing qualities in graphics, gameplay and originality. Remember there are 49 other screens to work your way through. Alors, c'est magnifique!



SWORDS AND SORCERY

The award-winning, massively sophisticated Dungeons and Dragons game is yours for the asking. A huge game offering months of challenge as you develop a character and gradually progress through the hazard-filled dungeon If you've been wowed by the demo version, the thing itself could blow your mind.



Save £3!
OPTION 1
Any of these titles for £6.95

DOOMSDAY BLUES

Our demo program will have convinced you that this French title has a superbly original atmosphere all its own. But are you up to taking on the challenge the full game poses? Dare you discover the enemy that lies on the other side of that locked door?

SUBSCRIBE!

And get superb FREE software

Amstrad Action's subscription offers are famed throughout the land for their unmatchable generosity. For £16.50 (an amount which includes post, packing, everything) you not only guarantee yourself a 12-month supply of what is, let's be honest, your favourite magazine, you also get a choice of the cream of software available on the Amstrad.

CASSETTE owners can have ANY TWO of the following games all of which normally sell for between £7.95 and £9.95.

Highway Encounter (Vortex) – an AA Mastergame, great graphics, superb gameplay.
Yie Ar Kung Fu (Imagine) – another Mastergame, the combat game to end them all.
Alien 8 (Ultimate) – one of the all time Amstrad classics.
Marsport (Gargoyle) – massive arcade-adventure, AA Mastergame, great animation.
Impossible Mission (US Gold) – top-selling underground platform adventure.

DISK owners can have any ONE of the following Amsoft disk games, all of which normally sell for £13.95.
Raid – the classy, controversial shoot-em-up.
Sorcery + – the stunning expanded version that's too big to fit on cassette!
3D Grand Prix – the best motor-racing simulation on the Amstrad.
Strangeloop + – another blockbusting arcade-adventure from the Sorcery programming team.
Cyrus 2 Chess – powerful chess program, stunning 3D display.

To order simply complete the form below and send it off, together with payment to: **Subscription Offer, Amstrad Action, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 5AH.**. Please note that if your order arrives less than a week before the on-sale date of our next issue, your subscription won't start until the *following* issue.

OVERSEAS READERS: Please note we charge the same subscription rate for the REPUBLIC OF IRELAND provided that payment is made in Sterling. If you wish to pay in Irish punts the rate is IR24.00. This allows for a £3 fee the bank charges us to pay in Irish cheques.
For readers elsewhere in Europe the rate is £22.50 to allow for extra postage costs.

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I would like to take out a 12-month subscription to Amstrad Action and enclose a cheque or postal order for £16.50 made out to Future Publishing. I have circled my choice of free software below from EITHER the cassette selection OR the disk selection.

CASSETTES: (Please circle TWO):
Highway Encounter / Yie Ar Kung Fu / Marsport / Alien 8 / Everyone's a Wally / Impossible Mission

DISKS (Please circle ONE):
Sorcery + / Raid / 3D Grand Prix / Cyrus 2 Chess / Strangeloop +

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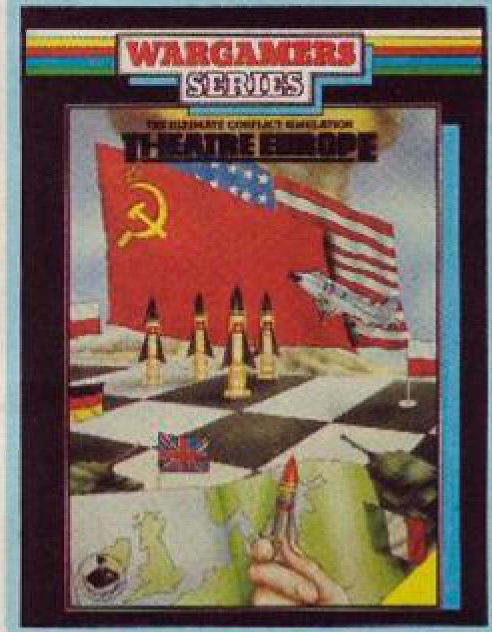
Save £18! **OPTION 4** Any FOUR titles for £21.80

Save £25! **OPTION 5** All FIVE titles for £24.75

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Now that you've had all that practice blasting aircraft out of the sky in our demo program, why not go for the real thing? The strategy part of the game is sophisticated in the extreme. Enough to earn it AA Rave status in our November issue. A great chance to reenact Britain's finest hour.





THEATRE EUROPE

This controversial program has as its scenario a modern-day conflict in Western Europe. Can you halt the Eastern Bloc forces using conventional forces? How will you resist the temptation to resort to chemical or nuclear weapons? A superb war game (AA Rave Feb), combining strategy and arcade sequences with a chilling and topical atmosphere. To sample it, try ringing 0203 668405.

You've seen the ads, you've read the reviews, you've sampled the action. Now for the real thing.

We're offering at huge savings all the superb PSS titles demonstrated on our cover cassette plus the chilling war game Theatre Europe. They normally cost £9.95 each, but you can have any one at a £3 discount. Buy two and you get £7 off. Three means a £12 saving. Get four and you save £18. Or you could go the whole hog and bag all five programs for no less than £25 off than shop prices. That's under half price!

You won't find any better way of getting hold of programs from a software house who now seem destined to make a massive impact on the Amstrad market.

All games are available on cassette and are compatible with the Amstrad CPC 464, 664 and 6128.

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Yes, I want to take advantage of the special offer option I have ticked below.

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Get Dexter / Swords and Sorcery / Doomsday Blues / Battle of Britain / Theatre Europe.

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Post this form plus payment to: **PSS Offer, Amstrad Action, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 5AH.**

PACE MODEM PACKAGE

Save £32.50!!

£139.95 complete
464/664/6128 compatible



Great news for anyone looking for the best way of getting their micro hooked into the booming world of telecommunications. This modem package contains absolutely everything you need and is widely regarded to be the best available. With it you will be able to join Prestel and link up with a growing number of Amstrad owners nationwide on Amsnet, a service which also offers news, reviews, technical advice and free software. You can also contact various bulletin boards and services such as Telecom Gold which allow you to use your micro to send telexes.

This is what you get:

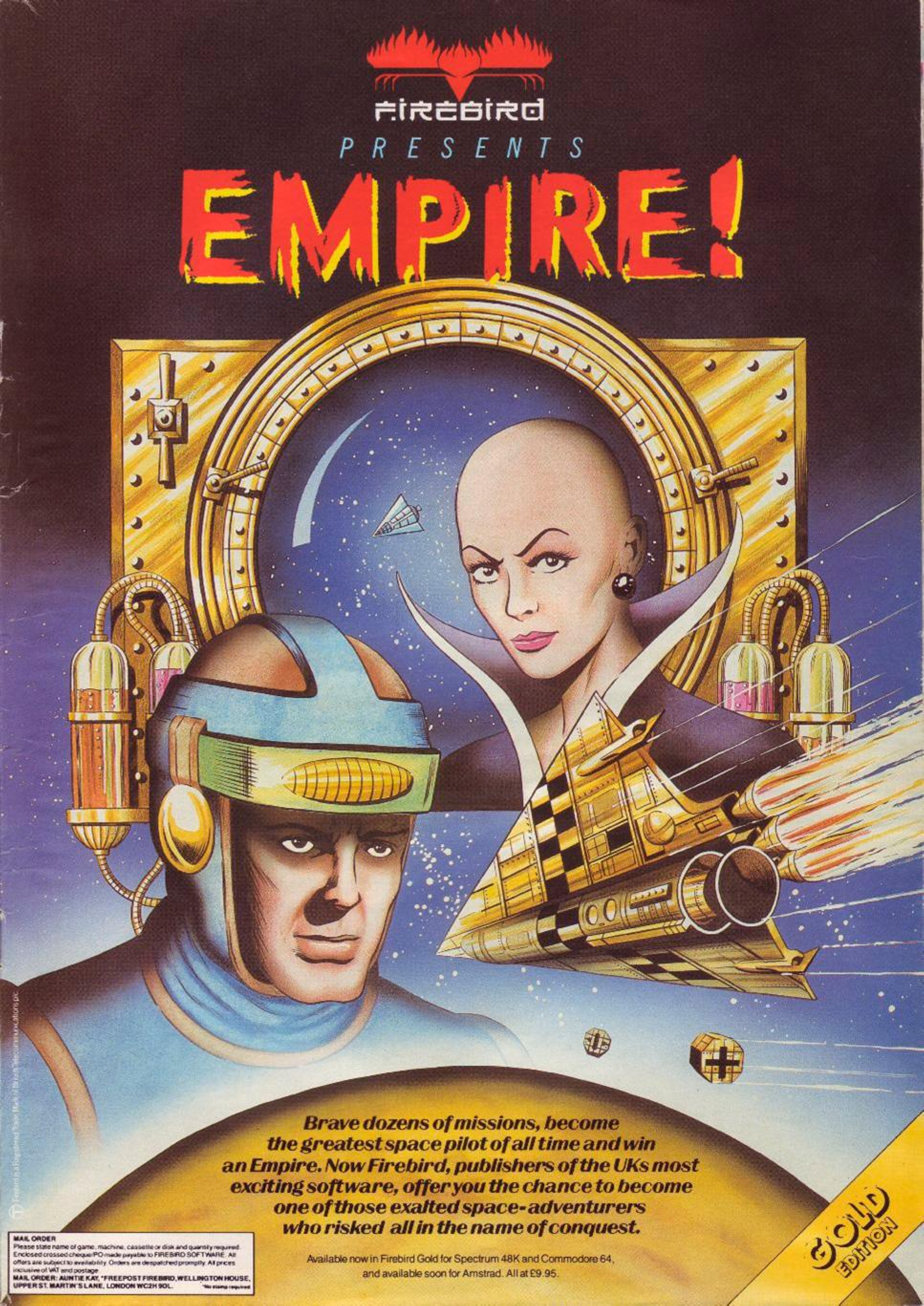
PACE NIGHTINGALE MODEM. An excellent, full-featured modem offering both the 1200/75 baud rate you need for Prestel and the 300/300 rate used by many bulletin boards. The modem has full BT approval.

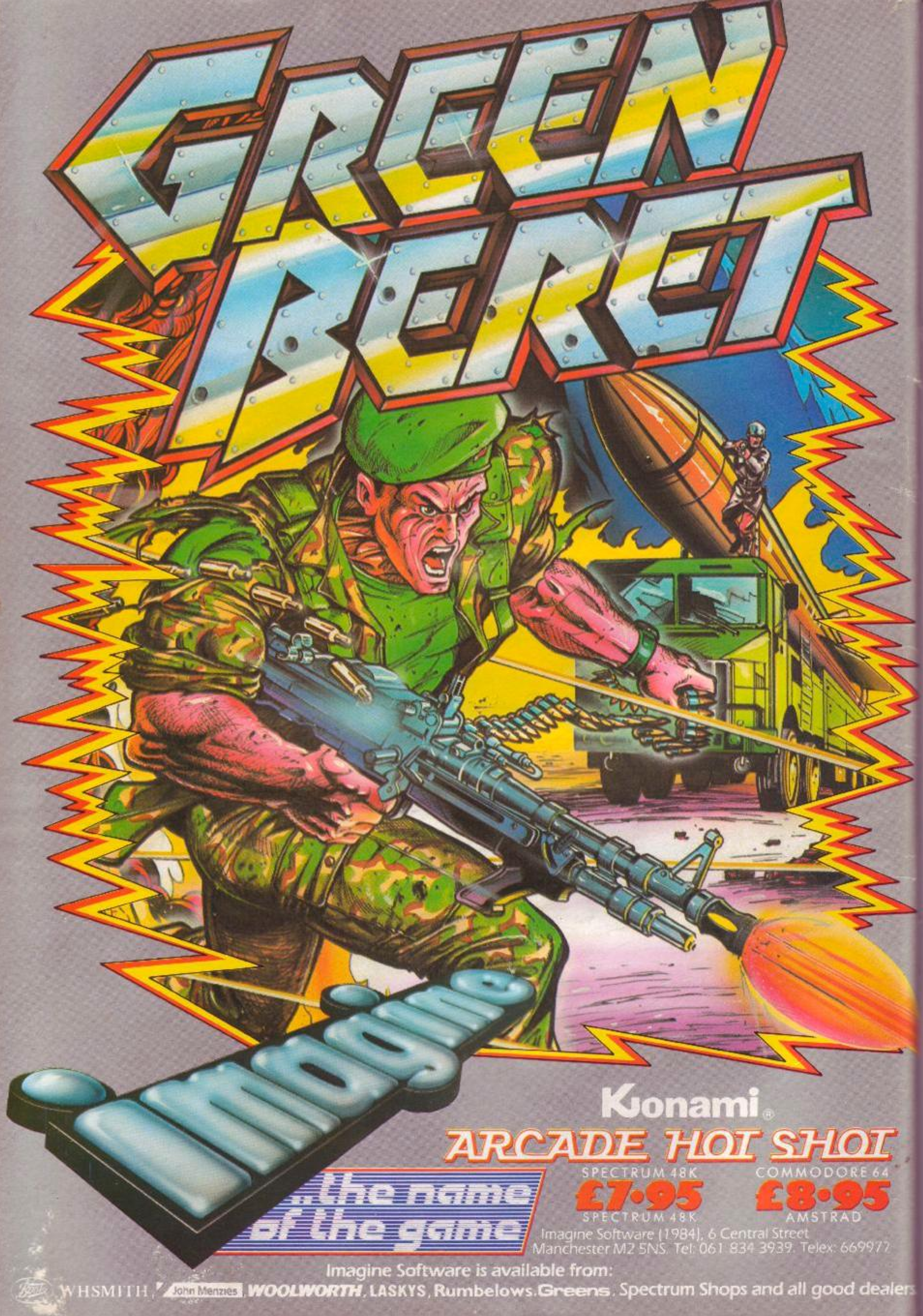
COMMSTAR SOFTWARE. This comes as part of an interface which plugs into the back of your Amstrad and links it to the modem. The software is the latest version of the much-praised Honeysoft package. It offers an extremely sophisticated range of options allowing you full access to all Prestel facilities including the downloading of software. It also supports easy communications direct to other computers.

ALL CONNECTING LEADS. The package has everything you need to plug in and go.

The normal price for this package is £172.50, and even that is a considerable reduction on the price of the constituents added separately. So our offer is unbeatable.

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